FORTEAN TIMES

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FORTEAN TIMES

A Contemporary Record of Strange Phenomena

FORTEAN TIMES is a non profitmaking quarterly miscellany of news, notes and references on current and historical strange phenomena, related subjects and philosophies. Formerly *The News*. Affiliated to the *International Fortean Organisation* (INFO), and the *Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained* (SITU), and other Fortean journals in continuing the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932). **SUBSCRIPTION** information and details of other deals can be found on the back page.

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FT27, autumn'78

FT and DAVID FIDELER

Thanks to the generosity of a member of the '3-legged Toad Cabal', your editor, Steve Moore and Ion Will were able to make a thoroughly enjoyable trip to Washington DC, to this year's FORTFEST. We had a great time, packed with Fortean and synchronous incidents, manic clipping of exotic papers, and good conversation, meeting old friends and making new ones. A high old time was had by all in the FT hospitality room. Our thanks go to all the FEST organizers for their tireless efforts, especially the perpetually worried Dick Leshuck, and to Ray & Dottie Manners for their generous transportations, and to Al & Phyllis who put up with us for a night after we missed a plane.

We were eager to meet Dave Fideler, a young Fortean from Michigan, whose energy and Fortean genius impressed us all. Dave edits his own journal, the excellent Anomaly Research Bulletin - but the next issue will be his last because he wishes to devote more time to fieldwork, research and writing (I know the feeling!) Seizing the opportunity we came to an agreement in which FT will absorb the balance of his remaining subscribers, and Dave himself joins us as FT's man in the New World. We are honoured to be associated with such a high-calibre Fortean and look forward to many contributions from him.

US PRICE INCREASE

It was overdue, but the recent wobbly dollar makes our adjustment to the US price more urgent. One way or another we have managed to keep our prices stable for over 2yrs, at the same time improving dramatically. Indeed some US readers think we are underpriced considering that much of our content is unavailable anywhere else for any price! Bearing in mind some plans for our future expansion we have decided that effective from next issue (ie the first in 1979) our basic overseas rate will be $8.00 per year, or $2.00 per copy. This also absorbs the banking surcharge on cashing foreign cheques, so there will be no further need to add 10%. Airmail surcharge stays the same. We are always looking for ways to improve our US mailings, so stay tuned!

MORE EDITORIAL STUFF

Obituary: Robert Charroux.....p11
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This last year has been an astonishing one for falling material, as regular readers will know. This time we have some accumulated ice-lumps and a small assortment of weird substances.

ICE FALLS

Somme, France - at 10.30am on 11th March, workers in fields at Becquerel, near Abbeville, heard a loud explosion followed by a whizzing sound, like an artillery shell. Following the sound they came to a fresh small crater containing a 25 kilo lump of transparent ice with "greenish depths". The lump stayed intact for about an hour, despite the sun's heat - and eventually "experts" arrived to take samples for tests. From Liberation (Paris) 13 March 1978; Le Soir (Belgium) 16 March 1978. Cr: Jean-Louis Brodu, Henri Premont - trans: IAW & JB.

Cambrai, France - at about 4pm on 14th April, some kids training on a football field were startled by something flashing through the air near them. It fell from a clear sky in brilliant sunshine to embed itself in a nearby patch of leeks. On investigation they found a roughly spherical lump of ice, about 45cm diameter, weighing about 20 kilos, that started to disintegrate almost immediately. Cambrai is only about 60mls from Abbeville, the site of the above story almost a month previously. From Nice Matin (France) 17 April 1978; and Svenska Dagbladet (Sweden) 20 April 1978. Cr: J-L Brodu, Ragnar Forshufvud (via Malcolm Lowery of SIS).

Heverlee, Belgium - as far as I can tell from the local lingo, a "Weer ijsklomp" was from "hemel gevallen" on or about 20th April, at Heverlee, near Louvain, about 80mls NE of Cambrai (see previous item). A fieldworker, Pierre Hendriks, found two large lumps of ice embedded 20cm into his topsoil. The largest lump weighing over 20 kilos, broke into three (see photo). Belgian meteorological 'experts' offered the usual explanations -- the only certainty is that Northern France and Belgium were bombarded with ice several times within a short period! De Standaard (Belgium) 21 April 1978. Cr: Jos Verhulst.

Tennessee, USA - at about 3pm on 23rd April - ie a few days after the Belgian icefall above - a 5lb block of green ice fell from a clear sky near the small community of Golddust, 60mls north of Memphis, on the Mississippi. The police said they were notified by someone who had seen it fall, but they declined to name the witness. A week can do wonders for our data - especially when they are mere 5lb weaklings on a crash course, for soon it was, in the eyes of some papers, an impressive 25lb hulk! The local sheriff's dispatcher, Debbie Crowell, cooed: "It has a nice little odor

to it." But some people cannot see past a colour, and soon 'experts' are calling our hero nasty names.

Fred Farrar, a Memphis FAA spokesman, blamed the incident on leakage of toilet fluids in flight, indeed Mr Farrar seems to be fascinated by leaky toilets, referring to 14 such incidents in 1974 alone. He tells of one case, on 30 April 1974, when an engine dropped off a National Airlines 727 60mls east of El Paso. Later investigations showed that a valve used to empty a forward toilet had trickled fluid along the fusilage and into the air intake of the right rear engine. The ice built up and jammed the turbine, wrenching the engine from its mountings. "The human feces had hit the fan," sniggered Mr Farrar. Miss Crowell, and many others, remain unconvinced these tales of aerodynamic scatology account for this and other cases. Laramie Daily Boomerang (Wyoming), San Antonio Light (Texas), Indianapolis News (Indiana) 25 April 1978 (Cr: JL Mabie, TR Adams, DW Prater.) Washington Post 26 April 1978 (Cr: Paul Willis). Norwalk Hour (Conn) 28 April 1978 (Cr: JJ Patchen.) Herald Tribune 29 April 1978 (Cr: IAW).

Colorado, USA - on the morning of 3rd May, two ice chunks fell from the sky crashing through the roofs of two houses in the town of Arvada. Together the lumps weighed about 100lbs. Nothing more is known. Sherman Democrat (Tx) 5 May 1978 (Thomas R Adams.)

Henley-on-Klip, South Africa - sometime over the weekend 22-23 July a large chunk of ice plummeted into a garden in Shilingford Road. It was about 10cm thick and "as long as an arm", and certainly not a hailstone (according to CSIR scientists). More appeal to leaky toilets - must be a new fashion! Once again little more is known. Rand Daily Mail (South Africa) 28 July 1978 (Cr: CJ Holtzhausen)

Colorado, USA - on the afternoon of 23 July, a chunk of blue ice crashed through the roof of an apartment in the Windsor Gardens district of Denver, knocking over furniture before shattering on the floor a mere 10ft from the startled occupant. It measured about 1ft in diameter and weighed about 30lbs. Aviation officials said they had narrowed a culprit-list down to 3 planes, and expected to have found the guilty one within a week -- they think. We heard no more. Denver Post (CO) 25 July 1978 (Cr: Thomas Adams). Note this incident's rough temporal proximity to the Henley item above. (Cr.also: Loren Coleman.)

Meyterton, South Africa - a "few weeks" after the Henley-on-Klip incident above, a second ice-bomb fell in the nearby town of Meyterton, sometime towards the end of the third week in August - Mrs Hester Swart thought her geyser had exploded when the block hit the corrugated iron roof of her kitchen. Outside, she found shattered ice around most of the house and the remains of a 20cm thick piece which had dented the roof. For once an airline spokesman pooh-poohs the airplane theory - despite the fact that both incidents are below an air corridor to Jan Smuts airport - saying the air here is too warm for ice to form. He suggested instead that moist air trapped in a circulating current would form a block in layers until the updraught could no longer support its weight - and indeed, Mrs Allsworth, the Henley housewife who found her ice-bomb had broken some branches of a tree near her house, said that layers in the ice fragments could be seen through a magnifying glass.

But wait a minute! If the air is too warm to form ice on planes at high altitudes, how can they from in thermal updraughts in the same area? Pretoria News (South Africa) 25 August 1978 (Cr: Chris J Holtzhausen).

Illinois, USA - on the morning of 29 August, a school inspector and some others were nearly brained when they stepped onto the football field of the Stephen High School, Decatur - a chunk of ice "probably as large as a man's head or bigger" came down a narrow 30-40ft away. For once we have a datum in which a plane was noticed passing over - but it may not mean anything... Decatur Herald Review (Ill) 30 August 1978 (Cr: Loren Coleman.)

STRANGE WHITE DUST

A thin layer of an unknown white dust covering houses, cars, roads and yards startled the residents of Port Arthur, Beaumont, Texas, when they emerged from their houses on the morning of 16 May. In earlier days we could have heard exclamations of "Sahara sand" or "volcanic dust", but the fashion in explanations shifts with the times - in a pollution conscious world pollution is the immediate thought, looked for and found. The giant Gulf Oil cracking plant at Port Arthur said the stuff sounded like the white synthetic clay compound they use in their processing and which might have escaped through a faulty vent (at a cost of up to $200,000 to Gulf.) That sounded good enough for the investigating

officer of the Texas Air Control Board, and Lo! it was pronounced synthetic white clay compound! Dallas Times Herald (Tx) 17 May 1978 (Cr: Thomas R Adams.)

BLOBS OF MOLTEN METAL

Shortly after midnight on the morning of 10 July, firemen were called to douse a small blaze at Third St and High School Avenue, Council Bluffs, Nebraska - and at the center of the fire they found a mass of splattered metal about 3ft in diameter and 3" thick at the center. It lay in a shallow impact crater. But this was not the first time such a strange incident had happened in Council Bluffs. On 5th July a similar splattered blob hit McGee Ave and Harrison St, and that too was so hot it could not be touched for 30 minutes -- and a third blob fell near Big Lake Park on 17 December 1977. In this latter case we are told that 'officials' branded it a hoax despite several reports of "a bright trail" in the sky that night. Adding to the puzzle, a USAF test of the December blob indicated that "it was neither meteor nor part of a space satellite". Results of any tests on the latest two incidents are not yet known, if indeed any at all were done in view of the 'official' opinion the events were hoaxed! Omaha World Herald (Neb) 11 July 1978 (Cr: Joe Swatek, Mark Hall.)

SLIME ATTACKS WASHINGTON

"It looked like a bad frost," said Jane Gillespie of the mysterious green slime that spotted her otherwise neat garden, in the Foggy Bottom area of Washington DC, causing her plants to wilt and blacken. The spots of goo seem to have fallen over 5 and 6 Sept and from high in the air, because the roof of a 12 storey building under construction was coated with the muck. Other residents reported their cats and dogs becoming nauseated "presumably after eating grass exposed to the substance" it was suggested, but initial tests by the Bureau of Occupational and Institutional Hygiene failed to identify the substance beyond: "It's green, soluble in water and alcohol...was very fluid when it came down...and turned more black as it thickened." Another resident, Mike Love, said his terrier's normally off-white hair turned to"blue or black"; for the period of several days it stopped eating.

Later news items said that tests eliminated the possibility of the slime being jet fuel or pesticide. A spokesman for the DC Dept of Environment said its principal components were nickel sulphate iron sulphate and manganese. It was "very highly acidic" and a "product of combustion" but "definitely did not come from an airplane." Its origin, however, remains a mystery. Washington Post 11 & 16 Sept 1978 (Cr: Al & Phyllis); Boston Globe, Arab News & Saudi Gazette (both Saudi Arabia) all 17 Sept 1978 (Cr: Loren Coleman, Ion Will); San Antonio Express (TX) 17 Sept 1978 (Cr: Thomas Adams.)

We don't know whether any significance can be attatched to the manifestation of slime so near the State Department, but we do note, at the limits of our chemical ignorance, a curious run of 'pollution accidents' or whatever, some of which also involved compounds of sulphur, in the wake of the slime-rain - we may as well give them here:

6 Sept - same day as as DC slimefall, the streets of New York were being sprayed with disinfectant during their Legionnaire's Disease crisis.

10 Sept - 17 cows dead at Rawmarsh, Yorkshire, as "lethel levels of fluorine" found on grass, origin a mystery.

13 Sept - 60 gallons of sulphuric acid spill on road near Canterbury,Kent.

14 Sept - 11 men hospitalized after a hydrochloric acid tank leaks, at Ashford, also in Kent.

18 Sept - 22 hospitalised as mystery 'chlorine' fumes sweep through building in Mayfair, London.

19 Sept - 3 die and 70 hospitalized as hydrogen sulphide gas fills a tannery in Genoa, Italy.

26 Sept - a drum of chlorine falls off lorry in Vancouver, Canada, creating gas cloud 3 miles long; 33 overcome, 100s evacuated.

And finally, prior to the DC slimefall over the first 2 weeks of August, a smelly green goo was bubbling up from holes in the inch-thick asphalt of a carpark in the Troy area of Detroit, Michigan. It throbs and slithers out in spurts leaving a slimy trail which dries to white powder as it flows down an incline. "Area chemists" say it could be hydrogen sulphide produced in the bed rock. Sources for this story: Washington Post 16 August 1978 (Cr: Al & Phyllis, John Michell); Lincoln Star (Neb) 19 Aug 1978 (Cr: Joe Swatek). Sources for the other incidents are on record here.

RJMR

diary of a mad planet '77

In FT18 we tried a summary of all the major catastrophic events of 1976, with some correlations to other synchronous events. That 'Diary of a Mad Planet' was well received - and has even spawned the notion of some kind of chronology project, but more of that anon. Such a project would be ideal for our computer, of course - but that's still in the future. Right now we have no substitute for sitting down to a monstrous heap of clipping and simply working through extracting their essence, aided by our trusty but erratic day-log.

Part of the impetus for this project comes from our roving clipster Ion Will, who has a keen eye for the superlative event or comment, and each year seems to bring more record-breaking phenomena - the "worst", "longest", "heaviest" "coldest", "wettest", "hottest" etc. The main purpose this time is to list the main geophysical and meteorological mayhem of 1977; 1978 in a few issues' time.(Who knows, this may become a regular feature!) Regretfully many other kinds of superlatives had to be left out - the "worst" swarmings of insects, the "worst" accidents, astronomical events, appearances of monsters, out-of-place animals and other parazoological omens, and the mysterious aerial noises, these will all be dealt with in coming issues under their respective headings, because we simply don't have the time to put in on the basic correlation. The end result - a mammoth listing that could possibly fill an issue itself - would be fairly boring in itself, and we are considering Dave Fideler's idea of publishing the whole correlation for 1977 as a special publication.

But for now, we give you the quakes and storms of 1977. The events are very briefly summarized on the day of event. For explanation of the codes see after the main listing. Most of the uncredited sources were either clipped by FT'staff', or sent in by a number of our regular clipsters, among whom Ion Will, Mrs Valerie Martin, Gary Abbott, Thomas R Adams, Paul Screeton and Nigel Watson contributed most to this section. To them and to all of you who send in clippings, I once again offer thanks on behalf of all of us - not only are clippings the lifeblood of FT, they are important for the record, and,as time goes by, invaluable.

JANUARY 1977

2 - Indonesia: 2 mild Qs (1/4).
- Argentina: landslide kills 18 (2/3)
3 - Greece: mild Q (1/4).
4 - Argentina: strong Q (1/5).
- Missouri: Q, 3.6R (1/6).
6 - New Guinea: Q 6.9R (1/7,8).
8 - California: series of minor Qs up to 4.6R (3/9; 4/9).
9 - N Pacific: new island from undersea V activity S of Tokyo (1/10,11).
10 - Zaire: Nyarangongo V erupts (1/13).
11 - USA: major snowstorm sweeps US from Canada, 20D (5/12).
12 - Italy, Switzerland, Austria: avalanches (1/13; 6/12).
14 - Spain: blizzards & severe cold (7/15).
17 - New York: "coldest day in NYC's recorded history," WCF-30F (5/18).
19 - Florida: snow "first in living memory (8/19; 9/20).
- Alaska: heatwave, T 20° above seasonal norm (9/20).
20 - Bahamas: snowfall "first in recorded history"; raging seas (10/20).
25 - USA: WHs bring cold to Deep South (9/26).
- S England: WGs 60-91mph (9/26;11/26)
28 - USA: WSs "frigid blasts" drop Ts from C Texas to Florida; N Illinois -80C; Minnesota -100C (2/30).
31 - Guadeloupe La Soufriere V erupts with tremors (1/1 Feb).
Gen: USA: heavy snows make NY, Penn, NJ, Ohio "disaster areas"; WCF-60F; Buffalo, NY, has 155" snow "this winter", average is 44" (9/31 Mar). Mass unemployment as factories, offices, schools close for lack of heating. Ohio & Mississippi freeze over. "Worst stretch of winter since 1872." As cold air blasts SE, Florida suffers "worst crop losses in history." Massachusetts has "worst winter fishing in 45yrs." (12/31). "State of emergency" also declared in Minn, Ind, Tennessee & Florida. (12/7 Feb).
Gen: Japan: "Heaviest snows in north in 14yrs"; 31D; parts have "coldest winter in 32yrs (9/4 Feb).
Gen: Italy: "worst winter for 10+ yrs" (6/12).
Gen: Australia: "highest Ts in 13yrs" up to 107F in NSW & Vic (13/31).

FEBRUARY 1977

3 - New York & Gt Lakes area: more severe blizzards; looters in Buffalo; wolves in Minnesota (15/6; 14/1; 13/4; 9/4).
- W USA: severe drought; lack of snow in Rockies & Sierra Nevada; California "abnormally low rainfall in last 18 mths" (9/4; 12/31 Jan).
4 - N Japan: "unprecedented blizzard" (9/5).
- French, Italian, Swiss Alps: snow closes 13 passes (9/5).
5 - New York: Buffalo area declared "major disaster area" (16/6).
10 - Alaska: "100 tremors a day", up to 3.7R, cont until 24th Feb (17/26).
11 - Madagascar: Cyclone Emilie, 30+D 1000s H (9/12,14).
13 - Yugoslavia: Q at Skopje (18/14).
19 - S Mozambique: "worst floods on record"; 25D, 10,000H (7/20).
- Aleutian Islands: Q 6.8R (1/21).
21 - Turkey: 4 "sharp" tremors (1/23).
25 - S England: rains, widespread flooding (9/26; 14/26).
Gen: USA: "Coldest winter since founding of Republic 200yrs ago" says Nat. Weather Service (9/17).
Gen: GB: "Britain's wettest winter for 100yrs" (29/9).

MARCH 1977

1 - Mindanao Islands: moderate Q (19/3)
4 - Romania: Q 7.5R hits Bucharest area, felt all over Europe, est 2000D (2/6; 13/5; 16/6). "Worst in Romania's history" (20/7).
5 - Kamchatka: "powerful" WT 110mph (16/6).
6 - Aleutian Islands: V erupts (2/7).
7 - Yugoslavia: Q 4.5R (21/9).
Gen: California: 1-7 March raging storms on coast, 37D (22/7).
8 - W Germany: Q 4R (23/8).
- Australia: "worst floods on record" on NSW/Queensland border from WC Otto, "disaster area" (9/9).
9 - Korea: Q 6.6R; felt locally, Indonesia (24/12), Malaysia (21/10), Japan (21/10), Thailand (23/11).
14 - USA: "killer blizzard" hits Colo, Kansas, Neb, Wyo & S Dakota; rain & snow cause flashfloods in NY & New England; 18D (2/15).
16 - California: "freak tornado funnel" hits Orange Co (25/17,18).
18 - Philippines: Q6.8R hits Luzon (2/19)
21 - S Iran: Q7R (11/22).
22 - Colombia: Q (11/23).
25 - Lunar eclipse.
- Turkey: Q (26/).
- N & C China: "serious drought"; peasants urged to "fight the weather god"; no rain in 6mths (9/22,26)
30 - France: Ts plunge to -4F (9/31).

APRIL 1977

1 - Bangladesh: WT 100mph, 100sD 1000sH (9/5; 15/3).
2 - Samoa: Q7.5R (26/; 2/4).
3 - India: mild Q (27/4).
- Japan: 3 Qs of 7.7R (28/4).
5 - Kenya: mild Q (9/7).
6 - Iran: Q5.9R (26/).
8 - GB: heavy snow & hail while the south has warm sun (14/9).
- Florida: "driest spring on record" (2/9).
- Reunion Island: V erupts "1st time in 177yrs; 800 evac'd (9/14; 15/10)
11 - Java: Q5.8R (27/12).
12 - N Haiti: drought & famine kill 28 (9/13).
13 - France: grapes hit by "worst frosts in 50yrs" (9/14).
16 - Sicily: series mild Qs (20/17).
- W Kenya: torrential rain, floods; 10D 3000H (29/17). Long drought ends.
18 - Annular eclipse of moon.
20 - Soloman Islands: Q series, main one 6.8R (26/).
21 - Soloman Islands: Q8.1R (26/).
24 - Bangladesh: WC kills 13 (9/25).
- New Zealand: Q5.25R (10/25).

MAY 1977

5 - Philippines: Mayon V erupts (9/6).
7 - Missouri: 3 days of tornadoes & floods make "disaster area" (2/8).
9 - New England: "freak snowstorm" & WG 70mph create havoc in NY, NJ, Mass, Conn & Vermont (9/10).
- California: heavy rain ends long drought (9/10).
12 - Burma: Q5.7R (26/).
- China: Q6.6R near Peking; claimed to be one of a cont. series of aftershocks from the Tangshan Q 10 mths previously!!!(9/13,14).
13 - Philippines: Mayon V erupting, 8000 evacuated (5/15; 7/14).
- Bangladesh: WC 100mph + waves + mild Qs (5/14).
- Kenya: "heaviest rains in 25 yrs", 100D 21000H; 40" rain in 5 wks (average is 36"/yr)(5/14; 25/14).
16 - Australia: Q4.5R at Perth (27/17).
21 - Philippines: mild Q (30/22).
26 - Turkey/Iran: Q5.4R (26/).

JUNE 1977

1 - Yugoslavia: mild Q (27/3).
- Cyprus, S Turkey: Q6.5R (9/2; 27/3).
- New Zealand: White Island V erupts (9/2).
- Hongkong: water rationing after "worst drought in 128 yrs" (31/29).
2 - Iceland: Katla V shakes (9/3).
- C Italy: mild Q (9/3).
3 - India/Burma: severe floods,20000 D (10/4).
4 - Japan: Totemic pandas in Tokyo Zoo (gifts from China) perform rare mating; at same time mild Q shakes Tokyo (21/5).
5 - Iran: "powerful" Q in Kerman area (9/6).
18 - Oman: WH kills 50 on Masirah Island 20,000H (15/19; 29/19).
19 - S Carolina: Q3R (32/20).
22 - Tonga: Q7.2R (6/22).
26 - Greece, Turkey: "highest Ts ever recorded here" (152F) during "worst heatwave in 50 yrs" (2/1 July).

JULY 1977

2 - Pakistan: "heaviest monsoon in 41 yrs", 220D 20,000H (33/2; 7/3).
5 - Yugoslavia: 2 mild Qs (34/7).
6 - Abu Dhabi: heatwave, 114F,11D (7/7)
10 - Korea: Seoul area "worst floods & landslides in 5yrs", 200D (18/11).
- SW France: flooding "worst in 80 yrs", 30D (9/12; 7/10).
- Pakistan: more rain & floods, 12D (35/17).
13 - USA: heatwave begins in earnest.
14 - England: Q at Stoke-on-Trent "worst in 2 yrs" (13/15).
16 - SwissAlps: avalanche kills 7 (9/18).
17 - Sicily: Mt Etna erupts (36/18).
18 - New York: 100F "hottest in 11 yrs" (2/20).
19 - New York: 102F "T highest in 47yrs" 7th consecutive day of Ts over 90F (2/20).
- N Carolina: "heatstorm", 15th consecutive day of Ts over 90F; no rain for 2 mths; "1000s of fish die of oxygen starvation" (2/20).
Gen: USA: heatwave in 48 States; 112F in Arizona, 119F in Calif. (29/24).
20 - Japan: Mt Aso V erupts (2/20).
- Pennsylvania: 8" rain in 8hrs causes 12ft flashflood in Johnstown; apx 50D 1000sH (10/21; 13/22; 20/22). Source (2/24,26) says 10" rain in 7hrs, like a "blob of precipitation".
21 - New York: 104F "highest T in NYC's records" (29/24).
- Vietnam: WT Sara 82mph, heavy floods, havoc (34/31).
- New Zealand: Q7.2R (38/22).
- Philippines: Q6.6R (34/22; 27/23).
24 - S Italy: mild Q (9/25).
- Japan: heatwave; 95f; Japs flock to beaches to engage in new sport, 63 drowned, 80 missing, total this year of dead or missing on beaches 1600 (1635 in 1976!)(9/25).

25 - S Taiwan: WT Thelma kills 90, much flooding, damage (37/26).
- California: drought; water rations in 100 towns (2/24,26).
29 - Solomon Isles: Q7.3R (9/30).
30 - Alps: heatwave causing avalanches 8D (9/31).
31 - Canada: WS hits SW Ontario (27/2 Aug)
- N Taiwan: WT Vera 120mph (9/1 Aug).
- Japan: Mt Sakurajima V erupts (39/1 Aug).

AUGUST 1977

1 - Antarctic: T on Australian Mawson Base soar to 1.4C, first time in 24yrs above freezing point (20/13; (27/12).
- Burma: drought during the 'rain season', crops ruined (27/1).
- Indonesia: "major" Q, 105D.
- Korea: "worst heatwave in many yrs", "millions" take to rivers & sea & like the Japs some don't come back, 59 drowned (33/2).
2 - Antarctic: T at Mawson Base goes up to an astonishing 6.7C (seasonal norm is -30C!)(20/13; 27/12).
6 - Sicily: Mt Etna erupts for 2nd day (29/7).
- Japan: Mt Showa Shinzan V quakes 698 today (33/8).
8 - Japan: Mt Usu V erupts 3 times, quaked 1056 times before eruption covers 3600 acres with ash. Plane flying overhead hit by rocks! (34/8,10; 27/8,9; 40/9).
9 - India: Delhi area, floods kill 150, 200,000H (9/10).
- S Brazil: floods destroy animals & crops, 6000H (9/10).
14 - Sicily: Mt Etna erupts (9/15).
16 - Nevada, N California: after the drought, WH Doreen brings floods & landslides, not on the fields but, uh, out in the desert, "heaviest where it was least wanted" (41/17).
17 - London area: "worst deluge for yrs" floods & havoc (9/18; 20/18; 38/18)
19 - Indonesia: major Q beneath sea in region of Sumba, Sumbawa & Bali; 8.3R (according to Swedish observatory) 8.9R (Vienna observatory); "one of the greatest the world has ever known" (13/20); huge waves did most destruction; 116D (20/20; 38/20; 9/20; 42/20;34/20; 7/21).
- Philippines: WS floods 8000H (15/21)
- Japan: WS floods 2500H (15/21).
- South Africa: WS floods (15/21).
20 - Australia: Q7.5R Perth (43/26).
- Hongkong: Q7.7R (34/21).
21 - Australia: light Q at Adelaide (9/22; 33/22).
- Japan:weak Q Tokyo (33/22).
- Illinois: WC kills 6 at Lake Matoon (10/22).
22 - Sicily: Q4-5R (44/22; 23/23).
- Gambia: drought (21/24).
23 - Czechoslovakia: heavy rain, floods (9/25).
25 - C Italy: 3 mild Qs (9/26).
26 - Indonesia: Q6.4R (21/27).
27 - Indonesia: Q7.1R (45/28).
- N Tanzania: drought (15/28).
- SE England: heavy rain, floods (7/28; 46/1 Sept).
28 - Sardinia: Q5.2R "first Q ever known here", "extraordinary and exceptional" (21/30).
29 - Philippines: Q6R Luzon (23/31).
- Indonesia: Q at E Timor (47/30).
- C China: Q6.3R (23/30). Curiously China denies the Q was in China & places it at Luzon (9/31).
- S Spain: snowfall on Sierra Nevada "1st time in 100yrs" (47/30).
31 - NW Colombia: Q4R (6/31; 45/1 Sept).

SEPTEMBER 1977

2 - Texas/Mexico: WH Anita 155mph (41/3)
3 - South Africa: Q (15/4).
4 - New Hebrides: Q6.5R (45/5).
- Aleutian Isles: swarm of Qs of 6+R, "so many we didn't count them" said the Tsunami Warning Center at Palmer, Alaska (21/6) So much for the rigour of science!
9 - Indonesia: Q5.4R (48/12).
- Iceland: Myvatn V erupts (9/10).
10 - Japan: WT batters Okinoerabu Isle, 2000H (44/10).
13 - Chile: Q (9/14).
- Japan: 6 minor Qs (49/14).
- Hawaii: Kilauea V erupts "1st time in 18 yrs" (50/15; 41/1 Oct).
14 - Missouri: heavy storm floods Kansas City, "20ft wall of water", rain 15" in 36hrs; 23D 3000H considerable damage (10/14; 41/15,16; 38/15)
19 - N Philippines: WT Dinah rages for 4th day; 45D (9/20).
20 - Ibiza: 10" rain brings 15ft floods, 2D 1000s stranded (10/20; 38/21).
21 - Japan: Mt Usu V erupts (51/22).
23 - Albania: Q5.1R (9/24).
24 - Hongkong: "severe" WC (7/25).
28 - Hawaii: Kilauea V, 2nd day of eruptions (41/30).
30 - Hawaii: Kilauea V, flow of lava 900ft wide, 8 miles long (41/10oct).

OCTOBER 1977

7 - Indonesia: Q6.5R on Sumbawa (26/).
8 - Soviet Azerbaijan: Lok-Batan V erupts, rock, mud & flames (1/9).
- Lincolnshire: freak WC causes havoc in Grantham (9/10).

9 - N Italy: violent WS rages for 4dys, floods, landslides isolate villages destroy crops & cattle, 13D (9/10).
10 - NE Italy: floods devastate Po valley (9/11).
- Tonga: Q7.2R & tsunami (9/11; 5/11).
12 - Solar eclipse.
17 - Norfolk Isles: Q6.9R (26/).
- Pennsylvania: 2 separate blizzards bring chaos, 12" snow (22/17).
23 - Mozambique: "one of worst ever hail-hailstorms" pelted Maputo for ½hr, some hail up to 1lb, 100s hurt (7/23; 9/24; 38/24).
24 - Sicily & S Italy: 4 Qs (9/25).
25 - S India: 7 days of monsoon rains kill 60 1000sH (9/26).
30 - Albania: Q (9/31).
- Indonesia: Q5.5R (52/2 Nov).
- Soviet Turkmenia: "exceptionally heavy snow" "worst in 50yrs"(1/1nov)
31 - S England: violent WS (10/31).

NOVEMBER 1977

2 - Greece: "torrential rains" flood Athens, 25+D (11/3).
4 - Aleutian Isles: Q6.6R (26/).
6 - Bulgaria: mild Q (9/7).
- SW Virginia: severe floods (41/7,10)
9 - Iran: Q4.6R (26/).
- N Midwest USA: "early" blizzard & WG 80mph cause havoc (41/10).
10 - London: "warmest Nov day since 1946" (9/11).
- Australia: Sydney WG 80mph (9/11).
11 - Mexico: severe cold 7D (9/12).
- S England: 36hrs of gales,floods, storms, rain, cold & snow (29/13; 9/12,14; 13/12; 10/12).
12 - England: WG continues 5D 9 missing 90mph (15/13).
- India:"worst typhoon & tidal wave in more than a century", 12ft high it obliterated 8 villages in 30mins; Tamil Nadu state, 10,000D, 3000 missing, 200,000H (29/20; 9/22).
- China: "thickest fog ever recorded" in Peking (15/13).
15 - Philippines: WT Kim 30,000H (9/16).
18 - E Tibet & SW China: Q6.7R (9/19; 26)
19 - S India: 100mph WC, 15" rain in 8hrs in Andra Pradesh state, "dozens of villages destroyed", est 20,000D & 2 million H (29/20; 9/22; 15/27).
20 - Nth England: hailstorm leaves 2" heaps on roads (9/21).
- Somerset: hailstorm (9/21).
- S Somalia: heavy flooding (9/22).
22 - Chile: Q7R (53/23).
23 - Argentina: Q7.4R (26/).
24 - Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil: Q7+R, 50D (9/25).
26 - China: Q near Peking (52/28).
- C Italy: heavy snow, chaos (7/27).
27 - Philippines: mild Q (52/28).
28 - Argentina: major Q, 70D; "150 mild Qs since 24th Nov" (52/30).

DECEMBER 1977

1 - Sweden; "worst landslide in 50yrs" 6D (52/3).
2 - Iran: Q5.5R (52/3).
3 - Kamchatka: "strong" Qs (54/4).
5 - Argentina: Q (52/7).
8 - London area: flashfloods after heavy rain (10/8).
9 - Turkey: Q5.4R (42/10).
10 - Iran: Q5R (26).
13 - Texas: WC kills 1, many hurt, near Houston (9/14).
- Mid Atlantic: Q6.5R (26).
- N Pacific: Q6.6R (1/14; 55/14).
17 - N Greece: villages cut off by heavy rain & snow (9/19).
19 - Iran: Q5.8R in Kerman area, 800D 1000sH; during "bitter cold night" (26; 9/21; 20/21; 5/21). Q happened near midnight & most papers dated the event as 20 December.
21 - Japan Q6.9R near Bonin Isles (26).
24 - Britain: WG & floods; "worst in yrs" on Cornish coast (9/28;5/4 Jan)
27 - China: announces poor harvest after "one of the worst years for natural disasters since Revolution in 1949" (5/28)
28 - Red Sea: Q6.6R (26).
29 - Philippines: Q (5/30).
- Yugoslavia: mild Q (39/30).
30 - Italy: strong Q (9/31).

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Letter Code: C-centigrade; D-dead; E-east; F-farenheit; H-homeless; N-north; Q-quakes & tremors; R-Richter; S-south; T-temperature; V-volcano or volcanic activity; W-west; WC-cyclones or tornadoes; WCF-wind chill factor; WG-gales or strong winds; WH-hurricanes; WS-windstorm; WT-typhoon.

SOURCES -- the first number in the codes above (in brackets) gives the source; the second number gives the day of the month under which the citation is listed (unless otherwise indicated).

1) South China Morning Post (Cr: IAW).
2) Times-Union Jacksonville, Florida, (Cr: Gary L Abbott).
3) Sunday People London.
4) Blade Toledo, Ohio (Cr: Tom Adams).
5) Guardian London.
6) Reuters (Cr: K Rogers, P Screeton).
7) Sunday Express London.
8) Miami News Florida (Cr: Gary Abbott)
9) Daily Telegraph London (Cr: V Martin)
10) Evening News London.
11) Evening Standard London.

12) Newsweek (Cr: IAW).
13) Daily Mail London.
14) Sun London.
15) Sunday Times London.
16) Sunday Telegraph London.
17) Houston Post Texas (Cr: K Lothmann).
18) Evening News Manchester (Cr: Peter Rogerson.)
19) China Post Taiwan (Cr: IAW).
20) Daily Mirror London.
21) Nation Bangkok (Cr: IAW).
22) Evening News Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (Cr: Larry E Arnold).
23) World Bangkok (Cr: IAW).
24) Indonesia Times Jakarta (Cr: IAW).
25) Los Angeles Times Cal (Cr: EC Krupp).
26) Earthquake Information Bulletin May 1978 (US Geol Survey, Virginia).
27) New Straits Times Malaysia (Cr: IAW)
28) Penang Star M'sia (Cr:IAW, J Klemes)
29) Observer London.
30) New Sunday Times Malaysia (Cr: IAW).
31) Straits Times Singapore (Cr: IAW).
32) Morning News Dallas, Tx (Cr: TAdams)
33) Star Malaysia (Cr: IAW).
34) National Echo M'sia (Cr: J Klemes).
35) Times-Herald Dallas, Tx (TR Adams).
36) New York Times NY (Cr: GL Abbott).
37) Evening Telegraph Scunthorpe, Linclonshire (Cr: Nigel Watson).
38) Daily Express London.
39) International Herald Tribune Paris.
40) Echo Sunderland, Co Durham (Cr: Paul Screeton).
41) Daily Press Newport News, Virginia (Cr: Gary L Abbott).
42) Times London.
43) Australasian Express London (C:IAW)
44) Mail Hartlepool, Co Durham (P Scrtn)
45) Post Bangkok (Cr: IAW).
46) Kentish Independant London.
47) Journal Newcastle, Nbland (P Scrton)
48) Guardian Rangoon, Burma (Cr: IAW).
49) Statesman Calcutta (Cr: IAW).
50) Amrita Bazar Patrika Calcutta (IAW)
51) Herald Melbourne, Australia (IAW).
52) Rising Nepal Katmandu (Cr: IAW).
53) Spectator Ontario.
54) Sunday Statesman Delhi (Cr: IAW).
55) Standard Hongkong (Cr: IAW).

- RJMR -

obituary

ROBERT CHARROUX

Erich von Däniken, in one of his books, expressed the hope that questions raised by Robert Charroux, Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier - as well as himself - would be answered in his lifetime. Charroux did not make this deadline. He died on 24 June 1978. He wrote 7 books, of which only a few have been published in Britain and America - special mention must be made of his One Hundred Thousand Years of Man's Unknown History (Berkley Medallion, NY, 1971).

It was Charroux's hypothesis "that before ours...there existed a very old civilization that had invented radio, TV, space rockets and helium bombs - until it was destroyed in a nuclear holocaust." (100 Years vol 1 p6) World history did not begin at Sumer, and science has conspired to keep from the public all finds that do not fit in with established theories, and Charroux made it his mission to disclose this falsification of history.

It will probably be of interest to readers of this magazine that he mentions Charles Fort as one of those who kept alive the search for the fantastic after Flammarion left off in 1862 (with his Inhabited Worlds.) Unfortunately, it cannot be said that Charroux's source criticism equalled Fort's.

In Charroux's opinion, it was "ridiculous...to explain each and every miracle by referring to black magic or scientific hypotheses without foundation. The incredible development of science does, however, allow us to believe that in the foreseeable future we will witness a strong development also of the budding seeds of the occult sciences." (Vol 1 p64) This remark boomerangs on himself when he acts like a contactee claiming secret knowledge given him by extraterrestrials, or when he uses muddled occult sources as evidence, or references to the libraries in Vatican cellars and secret black books from the East in particular.

But I do not want to be unkind. Robert Charroux had the necessary courage - and deserves praise for that - to ask of orthodoxy a large number of inconvenient questions. We can then correct him where he has been proven wrong - yes, we ought to - but at least he has given us a garden to cultivate, and we want to thank him for that.

KRISTIAN KRISTIANSEN.

(Reprinted, with kind permission, from Forteana 6 (1978). NB: citations above are from the Danish edition of 100 Yrs (Strubes Forlag, C'hagen, 1969))

Within a space of 5 months there have been at least 8 suicides by fire -- on 21 May, James Forrester died in Margate (D.Telegraph 22 May 1978); on 19 August, Terence Worton in Birmingham (S.People 20 Aug 1978 cr: R Skinner); on 9 Sept, an 'unemployed miner' in Ayr, Scotland (Detroit Free Press 10 Sept 1978 cr: Dave Fideler); 17 Sept, Pastor Rolf Günther in Falkenstein, E Germany (most papers); in last week of Sept, Naide Alves Prestes, a Proutist, in Calcutta; 1 Oct, a man on an internal Japanese flight (D.Express 2 Oct 1978); on 2 Oct, Lynette Davis, another Ananda Marga Proutist, in Geneva (most papers); and on 4 Oct, Pamela Evans Cooper, near Windsor Castle (most papers) -- 6 of these within 2 months. And god only knows what's happened in Japan (apart from the one incident above) in the light (sorry!) of a note in the S.Express 19 March 1978, that in 1977 alone there were more than 100 suicides by setting fire to oneself in Japan. This is mainly to introduce our notes on cases where motive for suicide is either unknown or quite out of the question -- yes it's SHC time again, and we have quite a lot of data - too much for the space allocation here - so cases involving children, deaths in prison cells, poltergeist fires, or from 1977 and before 1975, will all have to wait a little. For now, please toast...

SOME SHC(?)s FROM 1976

Major John Lyons was woken by the smell of smoke about 7am on 20 August - it was coming from the basement of his home, 13 Cavendish Place, Bath. He called the fire brigade immediately, not realizing that his daughter was lying in the room dead or dying! When masked firemen broke into the smoke-filled room they found the "badly burned" body of Claire Lucille Lyons, aged 23. Detective Chief Inspector George Herbert said matches were found nearby. Then he added: "The fire is a mystery. There is what looks like charred cardboard and paper..." It was not known what Claire was doing in the basement but it was thought she went down between 6-7am. Herbert speculated: "Somehow a fire started...which ignited Miss Lyons' nightdress." No conclusive or corroborating evidence could be found. Forensic people were examining the charred card, but we don't know what they found. Bath & West Evening Chronicle 20 August 1976 (Cr: John Michell.)

Kevin Copas came home from the pub about 10.15pm. His sister, Mrs Annie Kelly, 61, was still watching TV, so he went to bed. A few hours later he was woken by an explosion or "loud bang." He found his sister missing from her bedroom and went downstairs, shouldered his way into the lounge - the door was jammed - and saw his sister lying fully clothed on the floor of the smoke-filled room; then he made the fire call. The date of the incident is not known, but at the inquest it was said that Mrs Kelly smoked and drank sherry, and that an "almost empty bottle of sherry was found near the seat of the fire..." The Assistant Divisional Fire Officer, MV Jackson, said Mrs Kelly had extensive leg burns indicating the fire had started or burned on a low level. His theory was that she had fallen asleep watching TV after drinking sherry and that her cigarette had fallen on the carpet starting a fire there...but as in most cases we have to remind ourselves that this is supposition. Whether she was conscious or not, she had made little attempt to escape or deal with the flames - it's as though she just got out of the chair and fell over. She died, not of burns, but of inhaling carbon monoxide. Many might ask what we mean by including cases like this. In the first place there are many hundreds of cases like this in which the testimony includes varying amounts of pure conjecture (like: "She fell asleep while smoking "(plus or minus the "drinking" option.); or "...must have stumbled against the heater..." or "the pet must have tipped over the heater," etc). In the second place there seems reasonable

doubt that the source and even some of the characteristics of the fire were wholly or partly conventional (Fg a fire confined to the chair area on a low level; are they sure a butt could fire the carpet, assuming she was smoking then any way; etc). Lastly, if SHC exists (and we have no reason to think it shouldn't or doesn't) then its occurrence would create this kind of doubt and mystery. But as we say, like many cases the evidence is inconclusive - either way! Oh...and what the explosion was that woke Mr Copas, in his 52 Priory St, Corsham, bedroom, we are never told. Bath & West Evening Chronicle 22 October 1976 (Cr: John Michell.)

London Evening News 24 December 1976 - a brief note that Eileen McLinity, an 84-yr-old spinster, was found dead after a fire in her home at Hill St, Mayfair. Police supposed she was overcome by fumes and that the fire must have been started by matches...or cigarette. Either are to be found near any smoker. Curiously this small item is immediately followed by another even smaller. That a man was being questioned by police over a hammer attack on a 45-yr-old woman during a fire at Amhurst Rd, Dalston, on the other side of London. (Cr: Peter Hope-Evans.)

Mary Norris, 32, died in a fire at her home in Woodstock Ave, Isleworth. Although it was said to have wrecked her living room - this result may have equally been blamed on the smoke or the firemen's action - it was small enough to have been put out "in minutes." There are two interesting details, one suggesting fire-proneness, and the other a classic SHC symptom. Firstly it is said that earlier that summer a fire gutted one of her bedrooms. The second detail is that: "A fire brigade spokesman said he could not say what started the fire, or why Mrs Morris ((sic)) was unable to escape." (My underlining.) The incident happened on 29 December, and at the time of the report it was not known precisely how Mrs Norris died. Neighbours saw no smoke or flames. Slough Evening Mail 30 December 1976 (Cr: Peter Hope Evans.)

Note the clustering of these cases at the end of the year, if that means anything.

SOME SHC(?)s FROM 1978

On the 1st June the body of Andrea Deeley, 20, was found by firemen tackling the fire in the lounge of her home in Hunters Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham. She had died of carbon monoxide poisoning in the midst of a mystery - she was found still sitting on the settee which had somehow caught alight. Leading Fireman Andrew Hodgkins, one of the firemen, gets to the heart of our interest: Andrea seems to have made no attempt to escape the flames or her predicament: "It looks a bit funny when a girl of 20 stays in an armchair ((sic)). You would have thought that she would have made some attempt to get out." And a fire dept spokesman said "...no suspicious circumstances..." Huh? We note another detail: in another room in the house Andrea's father lay bedridden. Birmingham Evening Post 2 June 1978 (Cr: Lynne Moffat.)

The next story we pick up from X's Res Bureaux Bulletin 39p2, cited from our own Manchester Evening News 3 August 1978 - for once no one sent any clippings on this interesting event! We quote X's synopsis: "On the night of August 2nd, neighbours heard a piercing scream from the flat ((in Harpurhey, Manchester)) of Charles Richards, which soon passed into the hall. Looking out of their doors they saw him blazing away with flames from 'head to toe'. He pounded on the door of a neighbour screaming: 'Betty save me.'...The door was blackened where he had hammered. Another neighbour ...tried to put out the flames with his hands, but by this time a second flaming body (Doris Howard) had entered the corridor from Richard's flat. 'I heard a commotion in the corridor and saw them like two torches. I picked up a rug and started beating the flames. Then I realized that I was doing no good and could feel my hands burning, so I ran to phone for help,' says Patrick Furey. Richards succumbed soon after; but Mrs Howard died the next day, without giving any clue as to how they caught fire." Police said an argument had been heard before the event and that the walls had a few smears of blood. A tin of lighter fuel was also found, and assuming you can answer the question of how they both came to be covered in lighter fuel from head to toe satisfactorily, there was still no sign of how they were ignited; nor, according to the "baffled" police, was there any "sign of fire in the dead man's flat." They also rule out actions of any third party or "suicide pact". A mystery, what? More mysterious to me is how come our Manchester Evening News readers - and I know there are a few - didn't see, or didn't bother to send us this one! Shows you how lucky we are for - and dependent upon - your vigilance and effort.

Early on the morning of 20 August Maud Primrose, 54, died in a fire in her apartment on Sullivan St, Biddeford, Maine. She was alone and the cause of the

fire, or the lady's death,were not apparant. The note we have says the case is still under investigation. Bangor Daily News (Maine) 21 August 1978 (Cr: Loren Coleman.)

The body of Miriam Culine, 33, wife of a 70-yr-old travelling fairground boss, was found in a blazing car near rail tracks at West Cornforth, about 6mls south of Durham, at 5am on 22 August. At least the police think so - Mrs Culine had been missing since the 21st Aug, but beyond knowing the charred body was female, Detective Chief Superintendent Bill Connor admitted: "The body was so badly burned we may never be able to identify it. We are completely baffled..." Sun 23 August 1978.

HOT DOG - OR SAC?

It has been remarked by some researchers, Fort among them I think, that the deadly fire seems to strike only humans. We've reflected before on this and half imagined the element getting its own back for millenia of enslavement by man. However recently a case came to our attention which is not only suggestive but a good illustration of the conditioned reflexes of modern minds.

Doug and Jean Payne, of Queens Rd, Jarrow, Co Durham, own a 4-mth-old golden retriever called Hayes. On 6 Feb, Jean, 23 (aha!) was attracted by Hayes yelping "...so I went to the front window (and saw him) on the pathway with flames leaping up from his belly. A man was passing and he grabbed Hayes and rolled him in a puddle and on the grass. I was so upset I didn't even have time to thank the man or find out who he was." The pup was rushed to a vet, treated and is said to be recovering.

Now, police, animal welfare officers and the newspaper reporter all assume this was the work of some fire-struck fiend who hates flaming animals. A reward was posted for any information about "the culprit". The report said the pup was "burned on its underside with matches...", then adding as if pencil poised it suddenly occurred to the man that no dog is going to simply stand there while man or loony repeatedly strikes several matches, "...or a lighter." It is always possible in this less than perfect and always surprising world that a loony could have squirted ubiquitous lighter fuel at the dog, then lit it and ran off. But I'm intrigued by a detail - neither Jean Payne or the rescuer seemed to have seen anyone bending over the animal or running off, and both were alerted almost immediately by the dog's cries. But what does it mean? Newcastle Journal 7 February 1978 (Cr Paul Screeton)

BAPTISM OF FIRE

A bizarre note from our Name Game file, of which more sometime soon. It seems that a young Italian girl, in Caserta, near Naples, was sitting near a fire, when a spark, or supposed spark, leapt from the hearth to set fire to her clothes. Within minutes she was "une veritable torche" and died later in hospital, The name of this unfortunate girl, somewhat predictable with hindsight, was Giovanna d'Arco, burned alive like her namesake! Point de Vue:Images du Monde 28 April 1978 (Cr: Henri Prémont. Trans: IAW, Janet Bord.) RJMR

Grimbledon Down Bill Tidy

AMAZING!
YES, THE FIRST AUTHENTICATED CASE IN MY BOOK!
THINK OF IT, THEEM. IF WE COULD INDUCE SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION OF THE HUMAN BODY IN ENEMY SOLDIERS - POUF!
BUT HOW FANTASTICALLY LUCKY IT SHOULD HAPPEN TO A TRAINED SCIENTIST LIKE TIM BRADLEY. RELIABLE AND—
SNAP!
KEEP OUT
THAT'S HIS SEVENTEENTH HOAX CALL TODAY!
I WAS SITTING READING AND THE NEXT MOMENT MY FOOT SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUSTED! HURT LIKE HELL!
AAAAH— MY OTHER FOOT!

Reproduced by kind permission of Bill Tidy and IPC Magazines, from New Scientist 10 August 1978. There were interesting words on SHC generally in the 'Pig Ignorant' column by Peter Laurie (New Scientist 23 (naturally) March 1978 (Cr: Mike Tuppen, Chris Hall.) Either we have closet Fortean inside NSci, or we're becoming a trifle respectable. That's shocking - I'd rather become a trifle!

DAMNATION!

Methods of defusing and dismissing Fortean phenomena

by Bob Skinner

DAMNATION

It sounds like an oath, and well it might be: the oath of an 'expert' when confronted with yet another piece of undeniable Scientific heresy. However, I use the word in the same sense as Fort used 'the damned', referring to data excluded by Dogmatic Science. Damnation is the process of condemnation by 'experts' of events or discoveries or observations that are unorthodox or anomalous to a currently accepted view of universal reality. In *The Book of the Damned*, Fort resurrected much of the data, letting it speak for itself.

When using the term 'Science', I do so loosely, to represent those ultra-conservative elements, generally in science, but sometimes in other fields; in both cases the so-called experts are often unconnected with the subject on which they seem to be commenting so authoritatively.

There appear to be three main factors which, in combination, affect the weight of evidence for any given report, and thus the form in which any damning reply will take!

i) The degree to which the event apparently contradicts known principles or beliefs (e.g. a heavy object levitating would require more severe damnation than would a heavy object falling from the sky, because it defies an acceptance of the universality of gravitation).

ii) The number, credibility or professional status of witnesses (e.g. accounts from police officers have to be dealt with differently to accounts from children)

iii) The presence or absence of physical evidence (e.g. filmed observations of Sasquatch have greater weight than do unsubstantiated sightings)

Damnation has three distinct elements, and Fort recognised these as Deny, Explain and Disregard. Using these slightly adapted as headings, I would like to discuss the range of processes available to the debunker [1], the weapons and ploys used, and the recurring motifs that appear.

DENIAL

This ploy may be used best only on events of little weight, although it is sometimes feebly brought to bear on more substantial reports. Usually it consists of trying to imply that an event did not happen, or if it did, certainly not as described by the witnesses. Weapons used in the attack are libel, ridicule and flattery, claims of coincidence and fiction, and the red herring and scapegoat decoys. These subdivisions are arbitrary, and one or more may be used together.

LIBEL

I think it is strange that there have not apparently been any legal actions taken against those who have so publically besmirched the characters of respectable citizens, just because they reported anomalies. Fort records some fine examples. A Rev. W. Read, reported to the *Monthly Notices* of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1851 that he had observed through his telescope, at 9.30 am, a host of self-luminous bodies passing at different speeds. The editor dared to suggest that the observation was possibly attributed to an abnormal state of the optic nerves of the observer. Did he really mean that he thought the vicar ought to get his eyes tested? He was rightly rebuffed by the good reverend in a subsequent issue. He had been a diligent observer, with instruments of a superior order for about 28 years, he said – besides two other members of his family had also seen the spectacle [2].

The mental stability of observers does not escape calumnous attack: A Professor Smith, commenting on a Dr. Hahn who had photographed and described fossils of microscopic invertebrates he had discovered in meteorites, called him 'a kind of half-insane man, whose imagination has run away with him'. Needless to say, the Professor had not examined the meteorites himself [3].

Insinuations of insobriety are more common: A Mr J.W. Robertson reported in a magazine his sighting in the Persian Gulf of two huge 'light wheels', from on board the SS Patna in 1880. He remarked on the size and the speed of rotation of the rays of the wheels. In a subsequent issue another correspondent says he thinks there must have been much 'splicing of the mainbrace' resulting in such a state that any ray of light would have taken on a rotary motion [4]. A reader of Fort will find many other instances of substantially identical light wheels being seen under the sea [5].

RIDICULE

The more ridiculous the report appears to be, or the sillier the witness can be made to seem, the better. A humorous, tongue in cheek, treatment of an occurrence when it is published in a newspaper or magazine, sows seeds of doubt in a reader's mind as to its reality. We tend to laugh at what is unknown; it is a release of the tension of fear, 'whistling in the dark'. Fort aptly described knowledge as ignorance surrounded by laughter [6]. However, to find something that is really meriting ridicule, one only has to read some 'expert' explanations of strange phenomena.

COINCIDENCE

Under this heading we come across the first of the three main motifs in explanation, 'it was on the ground in the first place'. It was commonly used about meteorites before their 'undamning' by science. As late as 1902, there were still doubters though, and a Member of the Selborne Society still argued that meteorites do not fall from the sky. He stated that they were lumps of iron — 'upon the ground in the first place' — that attracted lightning. The lightning was seen and misinterpreted as the fall of a luminous object [7]. The same motif is still used in the cases of reported showers of non-meteoric minerals and organisms. These are, they say, only noticed after the rain-shower, and are thought to have fallen, by superstitious people. This argument cannot be used in the case of things or organisms not normally found on the ground that are reported to have fallen from the sky.

FLATTERY

If used skilfully, this one can be effective. The 'expert' appeals to the common sense of the reader, saying, for instance, that it is 'hardly necessary to suggest to the intelligent reader that thunderstorms are a myth' [8]. Anyone with at least a public (primary) school education should know better than to write that quartz had ever fallen from the sky, the 'expert' says [9]. The second well-worn motif, a development from the first, appeals to logic 'There is no . . . in the sky, therefore, no . . . can fall from the sky' — the spaces being filled with whatever is claimed to have done just that.

FICTION

This attack is rarely levelled. It is, however, safe to suggest that a report is a fabrication if it originates from a child, or some other individual who cannot defend himself adequately against such an allegation. It is also safe to use if the occurrence is reported to have happened, or is first revealed on, April 1st; or seen on the way home from a pub-crawl. Fraud has been alleged in cases of anomalous archaeological finds, such as Roman coins in American burial mounds [10]. Such a claim would have been correct in the case of the Piltdown Man find, but was never made, as the find supported a theory [11] many years passed before the hoax was revealed.

RED HERRING AND SCAPEGOAT

I have placed these two types of denial in the same section, as they both divert the reader's attention from the phenomenon.

Where an unimportant part of a story is exaggerated by the 'expert', or where an unconnected fact is brought in as an explanation, one can smell a 'red herring'. Such facts do not often explain even part of an observation. Damnation in some instances is by suggesting hypotheses that, in the light of the facts, are absurd. Clinkers were reported as having fallen in Kilburn in 1877, littering the street with an estimated two bushels in volume. A doubting investigator discovered that there was a fire station in the same street, and, apparently without vertification, suggested that the clinkers were raked from the steam fire engine [12].

The scapegoat explanation involves claiming that an occurrence happened as the result of a human agency. In most instances the person or persons are unnamed, or if they are, are unable to properly defend themselves. A child for example. This argument may not actually be used in the original published account of the phenomenon, but often appears as a footnote in a subsequent edition. A famous example is the supposed Worcester fishmonger, who was blamed for unloading his stale stock of winkles in the streets, and thus causing locals to superstitiously think they had fallen from the sky. The old on-the-ground-in-the-first-place motif does not explain how the molluscs came to be found on rooftops, unless we accept Fort's explanation of the impious, hardworking, but unnoticed fishmonger's assistants [13]. A report of a shower of blood and flesh over a tobacco field in Tennessee is eventually followed up by an explanation naming the scapegoats — in this instance negroes — who had pretended to see the shower and had scattered the decaying remains of a hog as a joke to test the credibility of their master. It seems highly unlikely that any negro worker, however much he might like the idea, would dare to actually do such a thing. It does not surprise me, however, that the poor workers could have been made to admit the crime [14].

EXPLAIN AWAY

If a reported phenomenon has more weight of evidence to support it, a more efficient method of damning, such as explaining away, is chosen. Often it does not deny the most salient features of a report, but the explanation offered does not fit all the details, or has some other characteristic showing it to be false. Occasionally a reasonable, logical explanation is offered, and until it can be shown to be false, it cannot but be tentatively accepted.

The only explanations that come under this classification are those that can be shown to be or are reasonably suspected of being, false. Most of the explanations cannot be categorised, but there are two major types. One is the third Motif of Damnation, 'Up from one part of the earth in a whirlwind, and down in another', and the other I have called 'Fell from plane/tree/building'. Referring to the strange atmospheric phenomena of 1883, Fort says that blue moons were as common as green suns. All this seemed adequately explained as the action of volcanic dust in the atmosphere from Krakatoa, which erupted in August 1883. Fort discloses two facts that throw doubt on this explanation. Firstly, the phenomena continued for seven years, except for a break in the middle of a few

years – where was the volcanic dust then? Secondly, Fort triumphantly reveals that there were reports of the phenomena prior to the eruption of Krakatoa [15].

UP FROM ONE PART OF THE EARTH, IN A WHIRLWIND, DOWN IN ANOTHER

This is the third motif, a refinement of the other two. Included in this section are those explanations of falls of stones, slag and black rains as being results of volcanic action. The whirlwind theory seems credible, especially when it is explained how specialised falls could be the result of sorting by weight of objects picked up by a vortex of air. Rarely, however, are there other specialised falls at the same time such as could be expected if the theory is true. The actual whirlwinds are infrequently seen, and it is yet to be explained how objects can be deposited on small strips or areas of ground, rather than haphazardly [16]. The repetition of such falls at the same place, sometimes weeks later, is also unexplained.

FROM A PLANE/TREE/BUILDING

This title refers to the supposed source of a reported fall of objects, ice, animals etc. It is just a matter of deleting the inapplicable, or inventing your own source if necessary. Ice falls are invariably attributed to aircraft these days, despite the records of this phenomenon pre-20th Century, and research that attributes that cause to only about 7% of cases [17]. A fall of fish in Glamorganshire in 1859 is said to have been caused as a result of a practical joke. A Dr. Gray of the British Museum suggests that one person, scooping a bucket of water from a stream threw it over another, who thought that fish in it had fallen from the sky. The fish covered an area of 80 by 12 yards, and some were on rooftops [18]. Such an unadvised dismissal is typical of many that litter the land of the damned; absurd solutions, unadvised suggestions and emotional rationalisations. Fort records the case of a reported fall of frogs that was attributed to the amphibians having fallen from trees 'or other places overhead'. Did this include the sky? Presumably not [19]. Pieces of a brick-like substance which were reported to have fallen in a hailstorm at Padua in 1834 were attributed to the supposed destructive action of the hail on nearby buildings. Fort, however, records what he terms a concomitant; an accompanying phenomenon. Some of the hailstones had a light grey powder inside [20].

Fort describes the effect of explanations or orthodox assertions as 'hypnosis'. Provided the assertion is glib, suave, brief and conventional enough one seldom questions it and is soon forgotten.

DISREGARD

This is probably the most commonly used of all the weapons in the debunker's arsenal, especially in the form of censoring, of filtering of information prior to publication. This means that the majority of reports never see the light of day. A secondary element is the deliberate suppression or whitewash, where data, or results that do not conform, are deliberately destroyed or tampered with so as to make them suspect.

CENSORING/FILTERING

Few 'Fortean' reports reach the papers these days, compared with the numbers in previous centuries. I do not believe that this indicates a decline in the occurrence of the phenomena, but an increasing refusal by the press to handle such news. An exception is in the time of year referred to as the 'silly season'. This is usually in late summer, when parliament is in recess, and the papers for want of newsworthy material, often cover what are considered as trivial stories, generally in a tongue-in-cheek manner. Fort noticed the reluctance of scientific papers to cover unorthodox observations, and saw this as the restraining hand of the 'System', and the surrender by the magazines of their 'quasi-individuality' and independence – he dates the start of this process as the early 1860s. Some apparently held out as far as 1880, but few traces of their coverage of the strange reports are findable after 1890, except in the correspondence columns of *Nature,* and the *Monthly Weather Review.* The whole process was seen by him as a 'throttling', but as he says, many of the excommunicated creep in and to this day some of the strangled still breathe faintly [21]. The policy of regarding unconventional phenomena as unworthy of publication was also followed at the museums. Fort quotes at least two separate curators who admit that many strange substances have been sent to them with the assurance that they had fallen from the sky. Few, if any of the reports were ever published as the materials were of 'non-meteoric' origin [22]. Some of this 'filtering' must happen at source, that is, with the witness, since people are often afraid of being subjected to ridicule if they report what they have seen.

WHITEWASH

This is a charge against the scientific authorities that can rarely if ever be proved. It certainly seems that Kammerer, whose results tended to show the inheritance of acquired characteristics,was the victim of someone whose interference threw all of Kammerer's work into disrepute. By using a normally land breeding toad, and allowing it to breed in water, after only a few generations he managed to show that nuptual pads were developed. These horny surfaces on the forelegs of the amphibian aid in the actual mating process, allowing the male to firmly grip its mate. Specimens were shown to the astonishment of many leading biologists, who examined the pads microscopically. However, chemical analysis showed that the hands of the examined toad had been injected with black ink. Immediately Kammerer's results all became suspect including his work with the salamander and Ciona, a type of sea-squirt. Arthur Koestler, in his biography of Kammerer [23], shows that this tampering could have only been accomplished a week or so before the examination, and the toad had been seen by many biologists months before. His guilt seemed compounded by his suicide – which might have been for reasons other than this 'exposure' [24]. In the field of UFOs, governments have been suspected of tampering with evidence, confiscating photographs, and intimidating witnesses – but the borderline between this and 'Men-in-black' activity is not clear [25].

There are cases in which key witnesses to strange phenomena suddenly change their testimony,

and this may be a result of pressure from the authorities, directly or indirectly, as in the case of the negroes in the tobacco field, cited earlier.

Having discussed the processes of damnation, it is now important to look at the reasons why Science so dogmatically excludes the possibility of the existence of extraordinary phenomena. I think there are two reasons – because they are not understandable on the basis of known Scientific beliefs, and are thus irrational; and because they may belong to a realm of existence that cannot be probed by science as it is at present.

The motive of maintaining the Scientific status quo was examined by Fort, who concluded that Science cannot maintain its approximation to consistency, stability and system without damning the irreconcilable and unassimilable [26]. This is like the logical viewpoint of a computer, which can only accept and reject on the basis of its programme. However, scientists should not be so blinkered as to be unable to see the need for an occasional change of programme. But Science changes slowly, in three stages according to Su Shu Huang. Firstly, a new means of experiment or observation is developed into a powerful tool, providing a fresh look at nature. Secondly, there is a proliferation of data not understandable in terms of known concepts and principles – this stage lasts the longest, and causes most frustration and bewilderment to scientists. Thirdly, sooner or later clarification comes in the form of a new concept explaining the baffling results naturally in a straightforward manner [27].

However, I do not believe that all phenomenal occurrences can be eventually explained satisfactorily by science. Because of its materialistic, nuts-and-bolts attitude, Science at present cannot accept or explain the spiritual, for example, and this leads to the damnation of phenomena that seem to be manifestations of that realm.

The study of any sort of mystery is bound to attract a fringe element, some with decidedly cranky ideas, and this inevitably makes Science loath to involve itself. However it would be good to see Science no longer damning, but investigating, accepting even the unexplainable, and recording such happenings until future enlightenment comes, if any. I hope that Science will one day no longer feel the need to fit inappropriate conventional explanations to unconventional phenomena.

Although I cannot support Science's dogmatic defence of the status quo, the alternative seemingly advocated by some, of a kind of anarchy with no physical laws, theories or reasonable explanations being even tentatively acceptable, is equally undesirable.

Bob Skinner – March 1978

Footnotes and References

1. 'Debunking' is a word that became popular to describe the USAF's dealings with UFO reports in the 1950s, originating presumably from the USAF side, as it means 'to clear of bunk or humbug, to show up (e.g. a theory) as False'. *(Chambers 20th Century Dictionary)*
2. *The Book of the Damned* by Charles Fort (Ace Star Books) p.206. *(Books* p218) [Eds note – since different Ace editions had different paginations, I've added, in brackets,the page from the 1941 & 1974 editions of the Complete Books of Charles Fort.]
3. Ibid, p. 84 (*Books* p.80)
4. Ibid, p. 252 (*Books* p.270f)
5. Ibid p. 252f (*Books* p.271ff)
6. Ibid, p. 30 (*Books* p.19)
7. Ibid, p. 32 (*Books* p.21)
8. Ibid, p. 108 (*Books* p.104)
9. Ibid, p. 118 (*Books* p.118)
10. Ibid p. 114, 115f (*Books* p.149f)
11. See also *Phenomena* by Michell and Rickard, p. 8f.
12. *BOTD* p.111 (*Books* p.111)
13. *Phenomena* p.8, 15 (*Books* p.548 ff)
14. *BOTD* p.49f (*Books* p.41)
15. Ibid p. 27f. (*Books*, p18)
16. See Ibid p. 90, 91 (*Books* p. 94f);'Fish Falls and Whirlwinds', R. Schadewald, *Fortean Times* 22p 31f.
17. *Phenomena* p.17 *Fortean Times* 23 p. 17.
18. *BOTD* p.87f. (*Books* p.84)
19. Ibid p.85 (*Books* p.81).
20. Ibid, p.119 (*Books*, p.119)
21. Ibid p.224f.
22. Ibid p. 126f.
23. *The Case of the Midwife Toad* (Picador Books 1971.)
24. His death is a mysterious one, and the verdict of suicide may be suspect. Kammerer was found with a gun in his *right* hand, and the bullet hole in his *left* temple. See Ibid, p. 118f.
25. See *Operation Trojan Horse* by John Keel (Souvenir Press, 1971; Abacus, 1973)
26. *BOTD* p.27.
27. Quoted by Damon Knight in his biography *Charles Fort* (Gollancz, 1971) p.79.

NEW INDEX, AND OP ISSUES

Phil Ledger has prepared the index for 1976 (FT14-19), and this will be available from next issue. In the past we have sent a free index to all subcribers as a bonus - but because we could only print a small number we found that some subbers were going without while others received indexes for which they had no use. We want to try a better method this time. With this issue subscribers will receive a voucher, and if you wish to claim your free index please return the voucher ASAP before our next mailing (Feb 1979).

Some readers have asked whether we intend to reprint out-of-print issues. This is always possible and various ways are under consideration. Meanwhile, if you can't wait, we could make photocopies at cost to us plus a small cover-charge.

TRUSS FUND

...in which we thank the following for their generous and appreciated support: Sid Birchby; Richard Cotton; Jennie Cameron; Isobel Davis; Mrs W Furness; MS Kottmeyer; Dr EC Krupp; Anthony Smith; Mrs V Martin. Thanks!

Our esteemed editor has allowed this improbable person a page or two per issue to present a selection of unsymmetrical notes on Fortean subjects relating to China. And so, without further ado...

'ELECTRIC PEOPLE' & CH'I ENERGY

Readers of John Michell and Robert Rickard's Phenomena will be well aquainted with the subject of 'electric people' (p36-7), where a conglomerate of interrelated phenomena may be found. One aspect I find particularly interesting (if I may be forgiven for a seeming lack of 'seriousness') is that of those young ladies who, having developed 'electrical powers', put them on the stage. Not that this demonstrativeness is particularly interesting in itself; but what was being demonstrated is. I summarise briefly: 'immovability', the ability to remain standing while four or five men attempt to push the demonstrator over; manipulating objects through 'invisible rays'; 'sticking palms', lifting people by merely placing the open palms on their backs; the administration of electric shocks to bystanders, and so forth.

The interesting thing is that similar if not identical powers are attributed to the great T'ai Chi Chuan masters of China. Apocryphal stories of 'super-powers' possessed by masters crop up repeatedly in the traditions and history of the martial arts of China, some perhaps exaggerated, some perhaps not. However, in the works of Robert W Smith, the noted American writer on the martial arts, we find accounts at first, or at least only at second hand, either parallel to, or hauntingly suggestive of the powers of 'electric people'.

I choose the works of Smith simply because they come most easily to mind and hand, but similar stories can be found elsewhere. In an article, published in Fighting Arts magazine (Vol.2 No 6), paying tribute to the late master Cheng Man-ch'ing (d.1975) he quotes his wife's reaction to 'pushing hands' practice with Cheng: "It was so strange. When he touched me I felt an electricity-like surge go throughout my body but without the shock".

In 'Chinese Boxing: Masters and Methods' (Kodansha, Tokyo, 1974), Smith, concentrating less on the methods, as his usual wont, than on the men, has several tales of ch'i; many about or from the lips of the respected

master Cheng. "Ch'i" is difficult of definition in any sort of everyday or scientific terms: it is at once 'breath', spirit, non-muscular energy, or 'inner power'. It is that energy which flows along the acupuncture meridians. It is also the energy developed by practitioners of the 'Internal schools' of the martial arts, the most well-known of which is T'ai Chi Chuan. But if it is little understood it is, according to Smith and other writers, frequently demonstrated.

In Chinese Boxing we find references to (and a photograph of) Cheng 'rooting' himself to the ground and resisting the efforts of four men to push him over. One master's 'rooting' is described as being so powerful that his feet actually sank into the ground. Another tale is from a woman student of a master in Shanghai: when she had attempted to attack him, she found a force propelling her backwards, and then she started bouncing up and down until her feet began to hurt. 'Invisible rays'? Another master, walking in the street with a friend, was hit in the back by a pedicab, which rebounded 10 feet and tipped over. The master, without a break in the conversation, walked on as if nothing had happened. Again, Cheng invited another boxer to strike his relaxed arm; he struck once and withdrew, explaining that his entire side had been paralysed on contact with Cheng's arm. And lastly, Cheng's teacher, Yang Ch'eng-fu, controlled his ch'i to such an extent that in 'pushing hands' he could magnetise or attract his opponent's arm so that it stuck to his own as he moved.

As I said, the similarities between the two sets of phenomena are remarkable; so is the difference. For whereas the electrical phenomena of the west usually arise spontaneously and are later controlled, or are a completely accidental nuisance, the ch'i powers of the east are produced by methodical training and practice, usually in persons who apparently have no spontaneous psychic or paranormal powers.

Whether ch'i energy is bio-electric in nature is a question on which I have no information to hand, but the above tales do suggest this. I am unaware of any attempts to scientifically test this, or even if any attempt has been made to register ch'i with any sort of measuring instrument. Perhaps martial arts practitioners who have reached sufficient mastery to qualify as test-subjects would consider it beneath their dignity to have electrodes attached to themselves while demonstrating; similarly, many might consider it an undignified affair to have to demonstrate ch'i to a skeptical group of scientists in the first place. Unless more information comes to hand, we must let the matter rest there.

But lest anyone should wonder if those aspects of telekinesis mentioned in the same chapter of Phenomena have any counterparts in the east, yes, they do. There are mentions of projecting the ch'i beyond the body to ring bells and snuff out candles at a distance. But it would take a brave man or a fool to try to sort out the fact from the fiction in those stories. Brave I am definitely not...but I might give it a try one of these days...

* * *

And finally, does this sound familiar?

"The world has no limit, and therefore anywhere is the centre, just as in drawing a circle, any point on the line can be the starting point." - Ssu-Ma Piao (3rd century A D). SM

NEWS CLIPPINGS

If you see anything of interest to FT readers in your reading, professional or scientific journals, or local newspapers, please clip it out, or make a note of it, add a note of the source, date, and your name . . . then send it to us. It all helps and there are surprisingly few duplications. Some readers have offered to scan their regular reading matter, and if you would like to do the same, please contact us for suggested periodicals not being covered by others.

* NEWSLETTER *

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REVIEW SUPPLEMENT

We welcome books and journals for review or exchange on all topics of related interest. The details and contents of journals are given in the next issue after receipt, and the return favour in their pages would be appreciated.

hardbacks

The Twelfth Planet by Zecharia Sitchin (G Allen & Unwin, 1977; £5.50; pp384; index, illos, photos) -- At first glance this well produced, and, on the whole, pleasantly written, volume offers the promise of being a stimulating and serious attempt to reinterpret ancient Near Eastern religion and human prehistory. Relying on Babylonian and Biblical mythology in the main, and displaying some apparent erudition, Sitchin develops a model for the origins of civilization that reminds one at once of the catastrophist theories of Immanuel Velikovsky and Robert Temple's claim of extraterrestrial intervention in the ancient Near East. The primum mobile of Sitchin's cosmos is a hypothetical 'twelfth planet', known to the Babylonians as Marduk, which he places on an enormous elliptical comet-like orbit stretching from the asteroid belt to the far reaches of the solar system. Every 3,600 years, he claims, Marduk returns to the vicinity of the Earth, causing major catastrophes such as the Universal Deluge, and as the home of a race of superbeings called the Nefilim, stimulating 'quantum jumps' in the progress of human evolution and civilization.

Sitchin begins with the famous Biblical verses concerning the "sons of God" who mated with the "daughters of men" before the time of Noah (Genesis 6:1-4). These verses are an old favourite of the extraterrestrial lobby, and perhaps justly so. Sitchin points out that the meaning of Nefilim, the product of this union, could be "those who were cast down" rather than the conventional interpretation of "giants". Certainly some belief in "other beings" is indicated, and here, if anywhere in the Bible, could be a reference to extraterrestrials. The Twelfth Planet represents some 30yrs of mulling over the identity of the Nefilim, who captured Sitchin's imagination in childhood. Anyone prepared to work his way through the anthropological literature making a comparative study of concepts similar to the Biblical Nefilim would undoubtedly find the task rewarding. Sitchin however seeks a short-cut and simply assumes that the Nefilim and the gods of the ancient Near Eastern pantheons were spacemen from the "Twelfth Planet" and proceeds to "translate" a few Babylonian epics and Biblical passages into histories of these ancient astronauts.

From the outset, Sitchin's approach is marred by an extremely narrow outlook and frame of reference. He must be one of the last people this century to imagine that Mesopotamia was the center of civilization, and that Mesopotamian myths, by virtue of having been written down earlier, are somehow the 'originals' of those of other Near Eastern cultures (including Greece and Egypt). He restricts himself almost entirely to a few Babylonian epics (eg those of Gilgamesh, Atrahasis and Enuma Elish) to develop his grand rewriting of human history - ignoring even Sumerian predecessors to these tales. The effect of his "Twelfth Planet" on the civilizations of America, Europe, Africa and the rest of Asia is not even considered, and outside of the Near East and Greece, the mythologies of the rest of the world are not even acknowledged to exist. Sitchin's method then is remarkable jejune - identify

the planets (up to 12) and 'spacegods' in the Epics and read the whole as history.

In making these"identifications" Sitchin displays a very limited understanding of Babylonian literature and civilization. He uses the Epic of Creation (Enuma Elish) as the foundation for his cosmogony, identifying the young god Marduk,who overthrows the older regime of gods and creates the Earth, as the unknown "Twelfth Planet". In order to do so he interprets the Babylonian theogony as a factual account of the birth of the other "eleven" planets. The Babylonian names for the planets are established beyond a shadow of a doubt - Ishtar was the deity of Venus, Nergal of Mars, and Marduk of Jupiter - and confirmed by hundreds of astronomical/ astrological tables and treatises on clay tablets and papyri from the Hellenistic period. Sitchin merrily ignores all this and assigns unwarranted planetary identities to the gods mentioned in the theogony. For example, Apsu, attested as god of the primeval sweet waters becomes, of all things, the Sun! Ea, as it suits Sitchin,is sometimes the planet Neptune and sometimes a spaceman. And the identity of Ishtar as the planet Venus, a central feature of Mesopotamian religion, is nowhere mentioned in the book - instead Sitchin arbitrarily assigns to Venus another deity from Enuma Elish, and reserves Ishtar for a role as a female astronaut!

By ignoring the received and deduced knowledge of Babylonian religion Sitchin weaves an extended space fantasy around his own unjustifiable identifications. In doing so he reveals the sloppiness and shallowness of his thinking, rapidly becoming silly and credulous when he turns to the evidence of religious art. The curious and heavily symbolic glyptic art of Mesopotamian cylinder-seals is a dangerous playground for speculation, especially when the author - and presumably most of his readers - know nothing about it. In this and other areas of local representational art, Sitchin rapidly degenerates into the tedious "new euhemerism" (*) of the von Däniken school. Every strange costume is a spacesuit, every pointed artifact an imitation of a rocket, large stylized eyes must be goggles etc etc. (But can someone explain to me why supposed goggles are so popular with the ET fanatics? Bikers, divers and welders, perhaps - but astronauts?) Sitchin has obviously put a lot of work into this book, but I cannot help feeling his labours have been completely wasted. His grand attempt to rewrite world history amounts to another weak exercise in the reductionism popularized by von Däniken, and one that is limited to a small part of the ancient world and flawed by innumerable errors of fact and interpretation. Sometimes it becomes merely pathetic - for example, in his discussion of the Babylonian myth of Etana (p153) carried to the skies on the back of an eagle, he comments: "We cannot help associating the ancient text with the message beamed to Earth in July 1960 by Neil Armstrong, commander of the Apollo 11 spacecraft: 'Houston! Tranquility Base here...The Eagle has landed!'... Eagle was the name of the lunar module." I'm sorry, but I'm not tempted by such silly insinuations! It is sad to see someone of Sitchin's intelligence wallowing in the same slavish worship of contemporary technology that forms the credo of von Däniken.

For anyone who expects a new direction in catastrophism or the study of extraterrestrial influences on the ancients, The Twelfth Planet will be a great disappointment. Sitchin seems to be totally unaware of - or not prepared to acknowledge - the work of Velikovsky and other catastrophists. Nor does it provide a single scrap of hard evidence for ET intervention: Twelfth Planet belongs to the same genre as Chariots of the Gods, not Robert Temple's Sirius Mystery. There are no references, and works are cited in the text by title only, no page numbers; most irritating of all, the bibliography contains an utterly useless list of the periodicals consulted by title only (not the issue numbers or even article titles) the inclusion of which can only be regarded as a pretentious attempt to appear scholarly.

Finally, Sitchin seems to have had trouble in following through his own theories. The dust-cover reads provocatively: "What happens when the Twelfth Planet returns to Earth's vicinity every 3,600 years?" Sitchin attributes the rise of Sumerian civilization, c. 3800BC, to an approach of Marduk, and one is presumably meant to believe that a return of the Nefilim can be expected around 3400AD. Fortunately, we don't have to wait that long to find out whether Marduk exists. It should have come round again c.200BC - but as far

(* Euhemerus was a 4th C Greek philosopher who taught that mythology had a historical origin and that the gods were but the magnified and distorted memories of earlier great men - Ed.)

as I know there were no cosmic catastrophes or influxes of spacemen around that time, and if Sitchin is right, the Hellinistic astronomers must have been asleep when the planet appeared. Sitchin forgets to explain to his readers what happened to Marduk after 3800BC - but after all, Twelfth Planet is an eminently forgettable book.

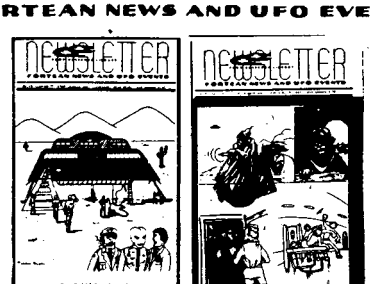
Peter James.

To Anger The Devil by Marc Alexander (N Spearman, 1978; £4.25, pp203, notes, photos) -- This astonishing book plunges the reader straight into a world that is, by ordinary standards, fantastic, a world of spirit possession and discarnate entities. This supernatural world exists today, and this is a (selected) casebook of one of the leading Church of England exorcists, Dr Donald Ormand. The narrative unfurls like a novel - and indeed Ormand here benefits from being professionally 'written-up', compared to, say, the equally interesting but more awkward casebook of Dr Ormand's colleague Dom Robert Petitpierre published 2 yrs ago.

The cases cover a wide range over most of Dr Ormand's life, beginning with his ministrations to the circus. Later, working as a journalist, Ormand investigated reports of Black Dog phantoms seen on Kettleness Beach, reminding Ormand synchronistically of the scene in Bram Stoker's Dracula where the Count is shipwrecked off this same gloomy Yorkshire village and comes ashore in the form of a gigantic black hound. As Ormand recollects this in Kettleness graveyard, he and his companion come face-to-face with a genuine Black Dog phantom radiating an aura of evil. Ormand promptly splashed it with a bottle of Holy Water. Later he is involved in the exorcism of several vampiric spirits, who generate violent bloodlusts in their hosts, only to find that the tougher of the cases involved a man who once visited...Kettleness! Such chains of coincidence are typical of the evidence we are presented. Like Dom Robert Petitpierre's book, and the vast majority of books written from the pulpit, as it were, the reader is not given much chance to test the material, but asked, indeed expected, to take it all on faith. I'm broadminded enough, and have read widely enough, to see the material in other lights, and even to me some of his cases seem too much to swallow, and the fact that Ormand's life, as presented here, reads like a gripping and thrilling adventure film-script, adds to the unreality.

But, says Dr Ormand, the powers of evil are very real, or at least have very real effects; possessed lions attack, haunted stretches of roads become killer 'black spots', stolen idols curse their owners with dispair, fear and ruin, and a man is persecuted by a vengeful phantom for some harm he did in a previous life (or by an ancestor of the same name). But none of these prove much of an obstacle for prayer and the liberal application of Ormand's favourite fluid. Nor is Dr Ormand a piker, since he balks not at exorcisms of truely heroic proportions - like exorcizing the great Arctic icebarrier and its seas (feared for driving sailors to throw themselves overboard with 'Sea Madness'), and even performing the same for the Bermuda Triangle and Loch Ness on the grounds that these areas have become possessed. Dr Ormand discusses the idea suggested to him by our own FW Holiday and others that today's monsters may be forms of evil projected from the past; their purpose, no doubt anxiety and the spectre of insanity. It all adds to a splendid medieval atmosphere in the book, since at the time similar phenomena to those tackled by the intrepid and fearless Ormand were fanned into Europes shameful witchhunts, scholars said the same about the enigma of fossils - that God had placed them in the ground to test the faith of men. In this case though, our own pages have recorded many sightings of that 'ancient serpent' Nessie (remember, St Columba stopped Nessie with the sign of the Cross back in the 6th C) since Ormand's visit in 1973 - so what hope for the Bermuda Triangle? Ormand gives some interesting incidental information on other water-monsters. He himself saw

FORTEAN NEWS AND UFO EVENTS



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one in 1967 in Loch Duich, Ross-shire, and again in the Troll fjord, Norway - he also refers to a monster in Lake Storsjon, Sweden (which he claims to have successfully banished), and one in Lake Vorota, Siberia (both these sites are discussed in Peter Costello's In Search of Lake Monsters).

But the gem of the book must be the long tale of the "displacer of souls" - a man who found he had the power to take over someone else's body, permanently, and body-hopped 4 times, ending truly repentent in the cancerous body of an old Syrian Arab. He asked Ormand to deprive him of his abused power, and before witnesses (sworn to secrecy) showed convincingly his ability to exchange souls...so convincing that one witness, a doctor, said: "The bottom was knocked out of my scientific world." One has some sympathy when faced with such pure Machen-esque (even Lovecraftian in places) tales with very little in the way of convincing evidence. One rightly hesitates to call Dr Ormand a pious fraud, since he comes across as a sound and intelligent person, and highly respected according to the numerous character witnesses, eminent doctors, psychiatrists and clergy, who insist that Ormand's word is not in doubt.

Strictly then, this is a book of anecdotes with little documentation, but nevertheless makes interesting, if chilling, reading, even if it leaves many questions unanswered. I for one would have liked to learn more about the mysterious Organization of Inquiry into Psychical Disorder (admission by election only, like a secret society) who form teams of psychiatrists, doctors & exorcists to study and cure cases outside normal medical and psychiatric experience. It is from this MI6 of the occult world that our psychic James Bond gets many of his 'assignments'. RJMR

The Man who led Columbus to America by Paul H Chapman (Judson Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1973; $6.00; pp202, index, bib, notes, apndxs, illos, photos) - The search for Lost America by Salvatore Michael Trento (Contemporary Books, Chicago, 1978; $9.95, pp284, index, bib, notes, apndxs, illos, photos) -- The man who led Columbus to America, Chapman convincingly argues, was St Brendan, the 6th C Irish navigator monk. Both as a mapmaker and as a sailor Columbus would have heard of, and become interested in, Brendan's voyages when he visited Galway, Brendan's deathplace. As a young man it was Columbus's dream to sail west and he avidly collected all the descriptions of the Atlantic available to him, and thus, must also have been familiar with Brendan's Navigatio, one of the first ever 'best sellers' from the recently invented Gutenberg press. Chapman reconstructs each stage of St Brendan's expedition, showing how Brendan sailed "around the ocean" - ie up to the Faeroes, down to the Azores and across to Barbados, then up the coast of N America to Newfoundland using the Gulf stream all the way back home via Iceland. This route is almost the exact reverse of Tim Severin's recent attempt to reconstruct Brendan's voyage in a "leather banana". Severin, fearing such a flimsy craft was not up to mid-Atlantic weather travelled via Iceland and Greenland, against the Gulf stream; but Chapman has more faith in the arts of the old boatbuilders and believes that Brendan's boat did in fact make an open transAtlantic crossing using the N Equitorial current from the Azores. (Appendix B is a record of such a crossing in 1968.) At every stage, Chapman gives us all the navigational minutae, leaving the parallel "miraculous" narrative of the journey to be interpreted in charming drawings showing the encounters with an iceberg, a submarine volcano, and the first descriptions of various new islands, animals, fruits etc. With detailed appendices, maps, tables, and the relevant passages from the Navigatio, this book should become a standard reference on the subject.

In recent years the idea that Columbus was not the first to America has flourished, with lobbies forming for the Chinese, the Celts, Vikings, Phoenecians and Romans - and regarding St Brendan's Irish, Chapman quotes The Generall Historie of Virginia, written in 1626 by John Smith, governor of the first successful English colony, which in its first sentence celebrates them ("...they say a thousand years agoe they were in the north of America..."). Also remembered (and today, with great affection among the Americans) is the colonizing voyage of the Welsh prince Madoc ab Owain Gwynedd, some 600yrs after Brendan, and whom, Chapman ventures an opinion, may also have used Brendan's route-map. More recently a controversy has grown up around the work of Barry Fell, a Harvard professor, who claims to have found and deciphered inscriptions found on stones (mainly in New England and the Great Lakes area), ranging from the Punic of the Phoenecians, to Egyptian, Latin, Runes and a

variant of the Ogham alphabet of the Celts (see Fell's book America BC, ie before Columbus). Sal Trento, a student of Fell's, has produced an encyclopedic study of those relics of early visitations designed to appeal to beginner and buff alike. It is extremely well done and will establish itself as a standard guide to the subject and to the thousands of standing stones, mark stones, inscribed stones, chambered mounds, tunnels and hilltop forts (many built in a recognizable style synonymous with European Celtic sites) that proliferate along the sea coast, the lake shores and banks of great rivers in America's eastern half.

There can be no doubt about Trento's thoroughness or enthusiasm for his subject as the great wealth of detail testifies - The Search for Lost America is rich in site photos and surveys, maps and drawings of inscriptions, tables, and an extensive listing of major stone sites; there is even a checklist for site observations and practical guidelines for would-be field explorers. Trento acknowledges the irony of the general lack of awareness by Americans of their own antiquities at a time when their interest is mounting in European origins. 'Lost America' becomes not just a euphemism for the ignored ruins in the local backwoods, but a comment on the crass indifference of the Establishment. Sal Trento hopes to kindle and encourage a new spirit of inquiry in American antiquities beyond the small band of his own enthusiastic helpers and the few others who care enough about the future to become interested in the past, not so much in academia, but among the new generation in their search for identity. This book should do it, and it is to be recommended to libraries, especially in schools, as a good starting point for the young and curious.

RJMR

The Stones of Atlantis by David Zink (WH Allen, 1978; £4.95, pp234, bib, apndxs, illos, maps, photos) - Secrets of Lost Atland by Robert Scrutton (N Spearman, 1978; £5.25, pp229, apndx, illos) -- Dr Zink's book is basically a personalized account of several expeditions to the Bimini Islands, led by himself, to search for the stones of Atlantis. The Bimini area was first suggested for the location of Atlantis by the trance 'readings' of Edgar Cayce - but the idea lay dormant until, in 1968, Dr J Manson Valentine, a Miami archeologist, and colleagues discovered portions of stone structure, artifacts, not natural formations, since when others have been found including a section of "road" (a pavement of rectangular and polygonal stone slabs) all under the clear island waters on the seabed. In the course of 4 expeditions (1974 - 1977) Zink collected a motley crew of experts, interested amateurs and psychics, and armed with a battery of equipment and tests, set out to see for himself. Sites were mainly located by diving searches in areas indicated by his psychics, a technique that seems to have been successful in dicovering some important structures, and from the dating of samples, Zink is convinced he has found the remains of a fairly sophisticated seafaring megalithic culture - despite the admittedly contradictory dates of various samples (from 13,000 - 500 BC!) As one would expect from an English Literature professor, Zink writes an easy but rambling narrative. He speculates at every opportunity about the evidence, and often quite wildly drawing on the usual ancient histories and theories, with regular appeal to Velikovskyan catastrophism, sacred geometry, the 'new archeology' of dowsing and leys etc, paraphysics and 'higher energies', and the notion that in times past Earth was visited by the Pleions, from the Pleiades, beings "of radiance and light, emissaries of goodwill". It is hard to tell whether Zink's thinking is shallow in these speculations, or whether he was merely outlining possibly tangential matters for the general reader - either way he adds little to these subjects or our understanding of them. The main interest of the book is the accounts of the discovery and dating of their finds - and of some they failed to find (even with psychic help) like the mysterious and elusive stone pillar which its earlier discoverer claimed lit up the water around it with clouds of luminous radiation! Another interesting patch concerns a side expedition into the interior of Bimini to locate the fabled 'Fountain of Youth' of Ponce de Leon - and lo! Zink found it...or something like it...or thought he did.

The Secrets of Lost Atland is quite different and concerns another 'Atlantis' somewhere north of Britain, which colonized "the whole of the ancient world from the north Atlantic to South America from North Africa and India to the Balkans," founding the Athenian State and the Inca dynasty, which used Britain as a penal colony (nice irony there!) and which was destroyed in a Velikovskyan collision with a "runaway asteroid"

around 2193 BC, and which might well have been itself a colony from the Atlantis of Plato. Phew! The presentation of the argument suffers from a major flaw: basically it is a continuation of Scrutton's previous book The Other Atlantis (Spearman, 1977) in which the key evidence was a translation of an ancient Frisian manuscript called the Oera Linda Book. This text is central to the continuing argument in this sequel and instead of providing a summary, or extracts, or indeed any helpful information at all, Scrutton merely and continuously refers the reader to the earlier book. This is useless for the new reader or those who don't have the earlier book, and actively obstructs the author's attempt to integrate the Frisian Atland (as he calls this Atlanean outpost) into the Western magical and mystical tradition (including leys, earth energies and occultism, sometimes with unfortunate references to suspect sources, like Madame Blavatsky's Stanzas of Dzyan). The result is a strange and compelling mixture of Velikovsky (Earth in Collision), James Churchward(the Mu series) Brinsley Le Poer Trench (The Sky People) John Michell (View over Atlantis) and Anthony Roberts (Atlantean Traditions in Ancient Britain). Again, minimal references and no index give little help to the reader. You must make your own mind up on this one! RJMR

Hallucinations: Behaviour, Experience, Theory edited by RK Siegel & LJ West (J Wiley, NY, 1975; £16.90/ $29.40, pp322, index, bibs, illos, tables, plates) -- Throughout history the experience of hallucination has afforded philosophers the opportunity of expounding upon a whole range of subjects from ghosts and apparitions, to mental disease, human gullibility and the nature of reality itself, and yet despite the subject's interdisciplinary importance most of the works on hallucinations tend to be from specific viewpoints. The editors and contributors are obviously aware of the complexities of the subject and have collaborated to make a state-of-the-art assessment of the understanding gained from modern advances in psychiatry, psychology, neurology, pharmacology, biochemistry, anthropology, sociology, information theory etc. This substantial and well produced book is part of a biomedical series and as such is more concerned with the various mechanisms of hallucinations than their content or meaning - and predictably the main points of discussion are visual hallucinations, and the use of drugs (both in society today and in archaic cultures). Hallucinations may arise in all the senses and in all combinations; and besides drugs they may be induced by disease, exhaustion, sensory deprivation, excitation and ecstasy, in some mental illnesses, and in some altered states of consciousness - but regretably these receive less attention.

The generally accepted definition of a hallucination is "a false perception in the absence of any corresponding external stimuli" - but although each paper seems to have its own redefinition of the word, they all seem to agree that the word "false" makes an unnecessary and confusing value judgement. A hallucination may produce as real effects (in terms of emotional, physical & metabolic response, for example) as any 'real' object - and indeed those who have experienced hallucinations in a positive spiritual or mystical context often describe the imagery as being in some undefined sense superior or "more real" than those of normal consciousness. Sarbin and Juhasz, in a paper on 'The Social Context of Hallucination', asknowledge the wide differences in usage of the term (eg between the clinical sense, the 16th C meaning of "ghosts and apparitions", and the modern derogatory popular usage implying character weakness or that the content is utterly inconsequential. Thus I find it very refreshing that the authors,generally, regard hallucinations, not necessarily as the product of damage, disease or intoxication, but as "one of many forms of image thinking" and a state of consciousness with its own properties. Thus hallucinations, relieved of the stigma of abnormality, can be seen to function as part of the continua of consciousness of sane and everyday experience, for example dreams, daydreams, and even in the basic perceptual processes themselves. Afterall, our brains don't touch a brick, but reconstruct such a sensation from sense data and comparisons with related memories. Such considerations make another author, Ernest Hartmann,reverse the usual question "What makes us hallucinate at certain times?" and ask, more profitably, "Why don't we hallucinate all the time?" - then he proposes a mechanism of inhibition revolutionary in its simplicity. For anyone investigating Fortean phenomena with a psychological component a knowledge of hallucinations is essential, and whole sections of this volume are directly applicable, for

example,to accounts of phantoms, religious apparitions, commanding voices, out-of-the-body experiences and so on. Each paper has a bibliography crammed with references to further material on hallucinations and related studies.

Ronald Siegel later wrote a long summary on 'Hallucinations' for Scientific American (237:4, Oct 1977, pp132-140) and this is well worth reading too (Cr: RM Wolf & SN Mayne). RJMR

The Vanishing People by Katherine Briggs (BT Batsford, 1978; £5.95; pp218, index, bib, notes) -- The first lady of fairylore once again gives us a fascinating and informative distillation of her considerable scholarship and experience from a lifetime's wandering down the byways of folklore. After her recent Dictionary of Fairies (1976), Dr Briggs returns to the themes she studied in Fairies in Tradition and Literature (1967; RKP 1977): hosts and trooping fairies; fairy midwives and changelings; fairy wives and lovers; fairy homes and types; house-spirits and helpful fairies; fairy morality and gifts; fairy games; and beliefs about the origins of fairies.

One is struck by the similarities in many of the elements of fairy traditions to other phenomena in our studies; eg the abductions of mortals and the 'supernatural' lapse of time in Fairyland, first studied by Hartland in 1850, and which seems to have been translated without significant divergence into the modern psychomythology of abductions by UFO-entities. UFO studies, as well as the fields of religious visions, paranormal phenomena, spiritualist phenomena etc still have no agreeable method for dealing with anecdotal evidence - no effective way for comparative study of the subjective testimony of witnesses - and it is here that we might learn something from the folklorists. Disregarding (for the moment) whether fairies can be said to have a 'hard' objective existence, tales or accounts are evaluated by analysing them into their component themes and motifs, each allocated its own code. Dr Briggs usually includes in her books a list of these numerical codes, not only to identify,quickly, the recurring patterns of experience or detail, but also to serve brilliantly as a finely tuned index to story detail...thus, as a recurring motif, weird time distortion during an abduction is F377, or

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fairies taking mortals up into the air is F329.3, etc. The coding structure was pioneered by Stith Thompson in 1966 and is now used internationally. Surely it is not impossible to adopt or devise a similar system to show up comparable motifs from other realms of experience (for example in terms of UFOlogy or religious experiences, F377 might apply respectively to a trip to 'another planet' or to heaven; and F329.3 (again respectively) might refer to rising in an anti-gravity beam or to levitation. So I mention this to show that fairy studies have many aspects from which we might profit - and if they help us make as fine a contribution to our own field as Dr Briggs does to hers it must be for the better.

'The Vanishing People' of the title are the fairies themselves, referring not only to their tricks upon the sight of mortals, but also to the fact that they are seen by far fewer people in this material age - but we are assured they are still there. Despite Dr Briggs attention to detail, general readers and those new to fairylore will not be put off. On the contrary, this book should delight all who have the slightest curiosity. RJMR

Needles of Stone by Tom Graves (Turnstone, 1978; £4.95; pp213; figs, refs, ind) Having dealt with the practical techniques and applications of dowsing in his first book, Tom Graves moves on in his second to discuss its wider implications and correlations to a number of diverse fields, attempting to build up a coherent model of the 'Earth-energy' network and its relation to our psycho-physical environment. Writing in an easy, informal style, he provides a summary of recent dowsing research on terrestrial energy-paths and their connection with sacred sites, drawing on his own work and that of Underwood, Lethbridge, et al. From there, he becomes extremely eclectic, pulling together material on acupuncture, feng shui, energy fields, weather control, ghosts, spirits, demons and, to a lesser extent, Fortean phenomena; finally arriving at a vision of the 'living body of the Earth' criss-crossed by lines of energy analogous to acupuncture-meridians in the human body; and 'controlled' by megaliths and stone circles analogous to acupuncture's needles.

The book has much to recommend it, but it has its faults too. It is well-illustrated, and well-referenced for the most part, although some of the material from 'other dowsers' seems little more than hearsay and speculation. The living-body model he constructs makes some sense as far as it goes, though Graves makes little attempt to extend it beyond the British Isles. There are points in the argument that need further investigation and clarification (as Graves admits) and such work would certainly be worthwhile. But there are places where I personally feel that he may only have drawn supportive evidence from sources which could just as easily have supplied a totally opposing point of view...

I think especially of feng shui, a quagmire of contradictions that positively invites fools to rush in (I speak as one with mud on my boots). Nonetheless, I feel the book has considerable value... though only time and further research will tell if its central thesis is valid. SM

Strange Planet: vol E2 - compiled by William R Corliss (Sourcebook Project, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA; $8.95, pp269, indexes, illos) -- The latest volume in Corliss' established and vital reference series is the second dealing with geological subjects. Its loose leaf/ring binder format and the cumulative numbering of cases allows the collation of material from several volumes under specific subheadings, as the series expands. This volume includes key source material (much of it from rare or unobtainable sources) on: fossil records of mass animal deaths, living toads in the hearts of rocks, sea-level changes, natural nuclear reactors, petrifying springs, myths of deluge, magnetic anomalies, spherical & cylindrical rocks, curious markings and impressions in rocks, tektites etc, ringing rocks, rambling rocks, 'inverted' strata, submarine canyons, craters and mounds, continental drift and topographical changes, etc. Once again it's worth saying that every library (from institutions to schools) ought to have a set of Sourcebooks. RJMR

Many of the books reviewed in these pages can be obtained from or through the following specialists in Fortean, occult, UFO, magical, health, comics, SF and alternative publications. Contact them for mail order or special requests.

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Sowers of Thunder by Anthony Roberts (Rider, 1978; £3.75, pp194, index, bib, apndxs, illos) -- I've been looking forward to Tony's book for a long time, and its been worth it. Tony is a passionate advocate of Blake's vision of Albion and fascinated by the ideas of ancient races, sunken lands and mystical forces. This book examines the figure of the giant in myth, legend, and history, and is impressively researched, with chapters on gigantic hill-figures, the giant legends attatched to standing stones and ancient sites, and to the freakish giants of flesh and blood. But one can tell that it's the idea of giants that attracts Tony and there is considerable running discussion of the giant archetype as a power and energy motif in the unconscious - and appropriately, the Albion giant in turn has evolved into a symbol of the revitalizing forces of the Earth mysteries. Tony's writing has never been clearer, and caught up in his own poetic insight, becomes a pleasure to read, and as informative and entertaining as Tony hopes it will be in his introduction. Although some of the subject matter overlaps with the exhibits of the von Däniken school, in that speculations are offered upon sunken Atlantis, the nature of the Elder Gods and their litter of artificial and natural monuments, Tony Roberts' appeals to the spirit where the former leave only vacuum. Tony also coins a new word, 'geomythics', describing the interaction between mystical topography, folklore, religion, anthropology and the physical landscape and its elements - more specifically it means the physical remnants, relics and records in our landscapes, antiquities and ancient sites of the existance in earlier times of the personifications of the raw powers of nature - and it is this dimension that makes it so much more than just a book about giants. Like all good symbols, the giant simultaneously reflects both an aspect of man and the greater external unknown he fears. Highly recommended as a good introduct- to all aspects of giantlore; with many illustrations; and appendices on Hoerbiger's occult giants of Ice and Fire, the giants of South America, Frank Buckland's encounter with a giant, and a useful list of the most significant and historically authentic giants. It deserves to be a giant success. RJMR

The Testimony of the Shroud by Rodney Hoare (Quartet, 1978; £2.75 paper; pp128, index, bib, photos) - Shroud

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by Robert K Wilcox (Corgi, 1978; 85p, pp193, index, bib, photos) -- Both books cover the same ground - the known history of the Shroud of Turin, the representation of a body said to be Christ's, the analysis and experimentation, and tales of mystery and miracles. Both books have faults. The first is written from an uncompromising conviction the Shroud is the 'Fifth Gospel' - the second, more popularly sceptical, and contains slightly more interesting information. RJMR

The Psychic Powers of Animals by Bill Schul (Coronet, 1978; 85p; pp176, index, bib) -- Having plundered pyramids and plants, its the animals' turn, but this collection of curiosa about our feathered, furred and scaley friends is competent, well written and often informative (though poorly referenced for those who wish to study seriously). Schul discusses many interesting aspects of animal navigation, ESP in animals, dogs and cats finding their masters across great distances, the intelligence of animals, special relationships between certain people and animals, animals that think and reason, and others who love being inside meditation pyramids, dolphins as superbeings, and of course the whole field of psychic qualities of animals, including whether they have souls etc. Well worth a read, but caveat emptor! RJMR

The Tumour in the Whale by Rodney Dale (Wyndham Universal, 1978; 75p, pp169, index, bib) -- Ken Campbell wrote a play based on 'Barroom Tales', those apocryphal stories that seem to crop up from all angles, in all countries, that happen to a friend of a friend etc. Dale has collected hundreds of such anecdotes, written them up in an entertaining style that relishes every irony and twist of grim humour, and illustrated them with Bill Tidy's brilliant, incisive and funny drawings. These modern folktales range from the ancient 'Jonah in the whale' types, to the stolen car with Granny's corpse on the roofrack; from mistaking a relative's ashes for packet soup in wartime, to microwave ovens cooking your kidneys; from bromide in the tea to the multiple murder of Rasputin; myths, coincidences, fantastic and improbable events (many of them distinctly Fortean) and the echo of themes from fiction in reallife events. The only trouble is that Dale is so bent on getting laughs from the material (quite successfully too!) that he seems to scorn the idea that such events have ever happened in 'real' life. For example, entombed toads - he gives a few stories, but says "unfortunately" toads need, food and water to survive, and quotes William Buckland's famous (and in my view inconclusive) failure to confirm the toad's survival of entombment by experiment. And so the case is, like many others here, laughed out of court - rather uneasily, I feel. As we well know, who collect such material, there are impressive quantities of authentic accounts of living animals embedded in the hearts of solid rock. Dale is just as glib in dismissing SHC - but then he is citing Michael Harrison's error-filled book. On the plus side Dale has incorporated the apocryphal tales noticed by Katherine Briggs in her works on British folktales, and the efforts of the scholarly folklorists. However don't let my niggles put you off - this would make an excellent and amusing present for any Fortean, even if they don't go along with the maxim Dale quotes from Voltaire about the necessity of "being interesting rather than being exact..." RJMR

The New Apocrypha by John Sladek (Panther, 1978; £1.50, pp376, index, bib, notes, illos) -- I didn't like this book when it came out in hardback in 1973, because of its expressed intention to debunk "myths and mythmakers". I'm more mellow now but I still think Sladek has a vindictive streak that fails him in his attempt to produce a sequel and update on Martin Gardner's excellent Fads & Fallacies in the Name of Science (Dover, 1957). Like Rodney Dale, Sladek writes well (he is an SF author) and wittily, and at the expense of his material, but unlike Dale he has comtempt for (not delight in) human gullibility. The book is the result of a prodigious feat of reading, surveying the twilight world of quackery, pseudoscience, food-fetishists, curious cults, von Däniken, UFOs, parapsychology, Lobsang Rampa and much more - however, despite his cleverness and erudition Sladek does not illuminate these beliefs much nor the obviously universal need for them. Interestingly, as in Gardner, Charles Fort is one of the few to emer-

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ge relatively unscathed (reluctant praise of sorts!) although his followers come in for some stick. The New Apocrypha deserves to be read by every Fortean as a critical study of human gullibility in areas of interest to us. Sladek also includes an extensive bibliography. RJMR

Occultism Update edited by Leslie Shepard (Gale Research Co, Book Tower, Detroit, MI 48226, USA) -- Last issue we reviewed Leslie Shepard's mammoth new Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology, sure to become mandatory for consultations on all aspects of psychic matters from personalities to subjects, terms and publications. Occultism Update is the first of four supplements to be issued, containing corrections, additions and new developments. After four issues the additional data will be incorporated into a new edition of the Encyclopedia. At $30.00 for the four issues, the Update seems rather expensive and is probably aimed at institutions and libraries, who should be encouraged at every opportunity to purchase the Encyclopedia - if this is unobtainable through normal book buying channels, apply directly to Gale at the above address. Update 1 (1978) contains 51 pages of entries to supplement or expand the main listing, and 10 pages of cross-referenced index. Recommended (if you can afford it). RR

journals

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Pursuit 43 (Summer 1978) - beamed power for starships; comments on TJ Constable's notions of UFOs as 'aerial lifeforms'; Clark and Davidson on cattle mutilations; underground cities; the physics of physics; phenomenological riddles; Schadewald on Fortean fakes; Eberhart on 'Witchcraft & Weather Modification' pt2; Larry Arnold on fiery phantoms of the sea; and more. Pursuit is published quarterly by SITU (Membership Services, RFD 5, Gales Ferry, CT 06335, USA) at $10.00/yr (or overseas $12.50 surface, or $15.00 air).

INFO Journal 29 (May/June 1978)- 19th C airship mystery; UFO notes; Fortean notes; the 'Force' of Star Wars; Monster Watch; Silbury Hill; Eberhart's 'Outline of Fortean Knowledge' & suggested shelf arrangement for Fortean libraries. 30 (July/Aug) - conference on saquatch; Turin Shroud; Fortean notes. INFO: 7317 Baltimore Ave, College Park, MD 20740, USA. single copies $1.75/90p - published bimonthly at $10.00/£5.00/yr.

CHAOS: The Review of the Damned 1:1 - At last after much planning X's project to publish discussion of Fort's source material, and to reprint the original material itself, gets off the ground. The first issue deals with the torpidity of bats; ball lightning; the spontaneous burning of Countess Baudi (or Bandi?); Fort's letter to the NYT on 'Visitors from Other Worlds'written in 1924; observations on 'Vulcan'; the Colvocoresses'murder' in which there was no sign of a bullets passage thru' the clothes; falls of animals; the Alaskan city mirages and others; the various 'heights' of Mt Elias. X is to be congratulated on this restrained scholarly and invaluable contribution to Fortean studies, and I earnestly urge you all to subscribe to Chaos and ensure its survival - published 8 times a year: Canada $15.00; USA $ 3.50; UK £7.00; all others remit Canada rate: to Mr X, Box 1598, Kingston, Ontario K7L 5C8, Canada.

X also publishes the very excellent Fortean newsletter Res Bureaux Bulletin available on exchange or contributions of information or clippings.

SIS Review, basically a forum for papers on Velikovskyan subjects - the Society for Interdisciplinary Studies also put out a members' newsletter called Workshop for news and active discussions and'informal' articles. SISR 3:1 (Summer 1978) is a summary of their recent successful conference in Glasgow, reprinting a few of the papers. One of particular interest to Forteans is Dr HA Meynell's 'Philosophy for Interdisciplinary Studies'. Membership for all interested in the serious study of catastrophist subjects is £8.00/ $16.00, or write for info to: Alan Hooker, 11 Broad Oak, Corseley Rd, Groombridge, Sussex.

Vestigia Newsletter - 2:1 (Spring 1978) experiments and results of 'spirit photography', plus discussion on ghost lights, Kirlian photos and polt cases (all under investigation by this vigorous outfit); 2:2 (Summer 1978) Vestigia's own statistical study of UFO patterns, more on 'lights'; 2:3 (Fall 1978) 'Spook light' update, plus aerial booms. Vestigia, one of the most active

groups today, publish results of their investigations in VN - for more info write: Vestigia, RD 2 Brookwood Rd, Stanhope, NJ 07874, USA.

Stigmata - a newsletter on the investigation of the animal mutilation mystery - 4 (Summer 1978) contains a summary of reports and investigations so far this year. The whole of Project Stigma is being reorganized and revitalized, and after a hiatus will publish Stigmata in a new format from Jan 1979. Interested? Write: Project Stigma, Box 1094, Paris, TX 75460, USA.

Journal of Meteorology - indispensible to the Fortean interested in weather phenomena etc - 3:30 (July/Aug '78) worldwide disasters for April & May, seafreeze, waterspouts, cold & dry spells; 3:31 (Sept '78) worldwide disasters for June, drought & smog, ball lightning, severe frost and 'anticrepuscular' rays; 3:32 (Oct '78) worldwide disasters for July, the Newmarket tornado and others, the great Indian cyclone, floods & storms. For details write: JMet, Cockhill House, Trowbridge BA14 9BG.

EVP Newsletter devoted to experiments, discussion and news on the subject of 'electronic voice phenomena'. Editor Alan Cleaver will have an article on the subject in a forthcoming FT, but briefly EVP concerns the detection of coherent voices through various electronic methods; voices that are unaccountable since many have been positively identified as those of departed relatives! Others claim the voices emanate from the human unconscious or even contact with truly alien entities! The EVP Newsletter is still fairly small and would benefit from your support - published monthly at £1.20/yr from Alan Cleaver: 72 Gladys Ave, North End, Portsmouth PO2 9BQ. EVPN is keeping abreast of developments in the subject - including the boggling prospect of establishing communication. Recommended!

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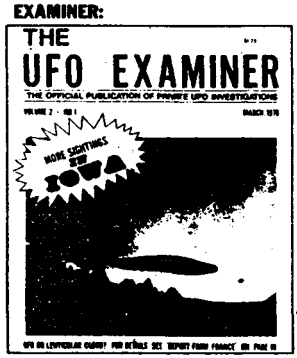

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Institute of Geomantic Research, have a range of publications - the Journal of Geomancy 2:4 coldharbours, Bury St Edmunds zodiac, Wandlebury, the myth of Alfred Watkins' vision, Masonic France, Andover church alignments, plus index for vol 2. 3:1 moves to FT-type format, Winchester zodiac, Chephren's pyramid, telluric lines, John Michell on Watkins' vision, how wide is a ley? Glasgow 'druids'' temple, and more. JoG is £3.00/yr. IGR also publish occasional papers; no11 is Nigel Pennick on 'Ritual Magic in the Church of England', no12 is a reprint of an article by J Edkins the missionary on 'Feng Shui' (these papers 30p & 45p respectively). IGR are also experimenting with another general ancient mysteries mag, called Albion - I hope they aren't over stretching themselves? For more info write IGR, 142 Pheasant Rise, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8SD.

The UFO Examiner - a new (to me) journal for 'private UFO investigations' - a UFO over an aircraft carrier in 1958, a Canadian UFO photo, the meteor of Jan 28, a Mt Pleasant UFO from 1920, sightings & news, did Carter see a UFO? report from France - for details see the ad on this page.

Flying Saucer Review 24:2 (Aug 1978) ufonauts plead for water in S Africa, 1951; encounter at Parkstone, Dorset; Puerto Rican encounters; sighting at Luke AF base; encounters at Risley, Cheshire, Spain, London; angel-hair case. FSR, West Malling, Maidstone, Kent.

*** We regret that many books, paperbacks and periodicals have to be held over to next issue - Ed ***

We have quite a collection of lightning deaths from the past few years, but to trot them all out would be fairly boring. The same goes for a long list of people struck by lightning who got away with it. Before moving on to a small selection of some of the bizarre pranks of lightning from these lists, I'd just like to note the 'filler' in the Daily Mail 15 February 1978, to the effect that retired park ranger, Roy C Sullivan, of Virginia, had "just been struck by lightning for the seventh time in his life." In fact the incident happened about 7 months earlier, in July 1977 - surely it couldn't have taken that long to reach British newspapers? Back in his fifth hit (see INFO Journal 11) in 1973, the force blew his boots off...and that same year another bolt-struck unfortunate was receiving offers to appear at Las Vegas after lightning had welded the fly zip on his trousers - see Daily Mail 20 June 1973. We'll have some recent cases, in order...

Daily Mail 11 Sept 1975 - a bolt vaporized electrical wiring on its way to a fridge, killing a young housewife in Knoxville, Iowa, even though she was standing on a rubber-backed carpet. More fortunately, the baby Vietnamese orphan she was holding at the time miraculously remained unharmed.

Sunday People 16 May 1976 - that on 15 May Freda Bell, of High Green Farm, Middleton, Cumbria, had just tucked her kids in bed and begun her ironing as a storm began. "A flash of lightning ripped down the iron, bounced across to the iron fireplace guard, then hit me," she said. "I was hurled across the room and found that the lightning had torn through my overall, ripped off my trousers and burned off my tights to below the knee blistering my legs. (Cr: Nigel Watson.) We noted at the time that Nature had only recently printed an account of a ball lightning attacking a woman in a kitchen (see Nature 15 Apr 1976.) - but we'll give this and other ball lightning cases next time we run this heading.

Daily Mirror 22 March 1977 - Paula Burgoyne, 20, walking on Dartmoor with her brother Andrew, 13, received burns on 40% of her body when lightning struck a fancy buckle on one of her shoes. The blast hurled both of them off their feet, and Andrew was knocked unconscious when his head hit a rock. When he came to he couldn't walk, and so crawled to a car park where the rest of their family were waiting for them. They found Paula - "All her clothing had been torn off and she was burned black from head to foot." - and rushed her to hospital, alive but seriously ill.

Daily Mail and other papers for 12 April 1977 - John Prenderghast, 23, was hurled backwards through the air when a flash of lightning burned a hole through one of his boots and three layers of socks. His companion, Brian Peters, had been sheltering from the wind, crouched down, was also knocked over by the blast. He dragged John to shelter, carried him for five hours back to camp and alerted a rescue team in the morning. (Cr: Peter Rogerson.) They were on the peak of Affric, Invernessshire, when John was aghast and taken aback - on 11 April.

Daily Mail and other papers for 2 May 1977 - in a similar incident to the previous one, Angela Walls, 16, was blasted unconscious by lightning that apparently pierced a tin in her rucksack and burned her clothes off her back. Strange, all this burning of clothes off young ladies! Some of her 24-strong party were also thrown to the ground, but recovered their wits enough to successfully revive the girl with the kiss of life. This took place on the 1st of May - a maiden sacrifice? - on Moal Siabod, Snowdonia. In her own account, Angela mentions that prior to the blast there was a "terrible hailstorm..." (Cr: Peter Rogerson.)

Daily Mirror 1 July 1977 - that a Greek sentry on the Bulgarian border was killed when lightning struck his bayonet.

Daily Mail 20 July 1977 - that on 14 June, Kevin Scott, 18, was killed while crossing a playing field, in St Helens, Merseyside, when lightning struck the fashionable neck chain he was wearing. At the inquest a police constable said that 2 three inch deep holes were found near the body. In the Daily Mirror account (same date) the PC said: "They were probably caused by the heels of the boy's shoes pushing into the ground." !!! (Cr: Paul Screeton, Peter Rogerson.)

Sunday Express 28 August 1977 - Frank Gilbert, 44, had just prepared 200lbs of dynamite for blasting a section of a new road near Birmingham, Alabama...and, yes you guessed, lightning struck it! He said: "Normally I wouldn't go anywhere near explosives during a storm, but this one rolled in suddenly." The very first flash found Frank's dynamite. He was hurled 20ft into the air and was immediately buried by a huge heap of rubble and earth. In his sudden take-off Frank had the foresight to pull his hardhat down over his face, and when he was buried the air pocket kept him alive until he was rescued. (Cr: Peter Rogerson.)

Daily Telegraph 15 Sept 1977 - one for you, Larry! There were 8 people sitting around the coffin of a dead man, in San Foa, Northern Italy, in a wake that they'll remember for a looong time locally. Lightning blasted through the wall of the house and set fire to the body's hair and clothes as it lay in the open coffin, on 14 Sept. (Cr: V Martin.)

Lincoln Star (Nebraska) 20 & 26 May 1978 - two strange holes found in a field at Humphrey, NB, were said to be caused by lightning (see above to another case of a double lightning hole). In this case the holes measured 5" dia and 20ft deep, and 3" dia and 7ft deep, and lay in an oval-shaped impression with a white powder around the rim of each hole. Radiation equipment indicated there was metal at the bottom of the 7ft hole, but nothing could be found. UFO buffs, Civil Defense and US Army investigators all had a look, but the man whose explanation was deemed most plausible was John Say, a chemistry prof at Norfolk and a member of MUFON, who said the holes were most probably made by lightning, the white stuff being fused silica. But surely lightning penetrating the sandy ground (and none of the reports say specifically the ground was sandy) enough to fuse silica grains into a mass, would leave the mass there for all to see? These fused masses can achieve wondrous lengths and shapes and look rather like a tree-root system made out of knobbly coral - an astonishing example can be seen in a photo in Vietmeister's The Lightning Book (MIT Press, I think; my copy is packed away somewhere!) - called 'fulgurites'. They shouldn't just vanish or vaporize - but the Humphrey holes were empty! (Cr: Joe Swatek).

Sunday Express 30 July 1978 - tells of an Austrian student, Georg Brachmayer, who was very fond of a "good luck" crucifix he wore around his neck. "Last week" as he drove cattle across a field at his parent's farm at Forolach, lightning hit the crucifix killing him. It also burned an imprint of the crucifix into his chest before melting it. Also Post-Bulletin (Rochester, Minn) 2 Sept (Cr: Mark Hall.)

We'll close with a tale which is almost apocryphal. Soon after the installation of COSMO, a brand new £5 million computer, in the Meteorological Office building at Bracknell, Berks, it was struck by lightning - or at least lightning blew its fuses (The Sun 16 June 1977). But then the weathermen should be used to the jolly japes of its more omnipotent (if cranky) namesake! A month after being zapped, COSMO forecast a very damp August (see Aug 17 in our 'Diary' this issue) - and sure enough fire trucks were called to the Met Office on Aug 17 to pump 4ft of water from their basement. Haven't they realized yet that something up there's hinting at greater mysteries! Daily Mirror 18 August 1977.

RJMR

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Forteana Corrigenda

We are pleased to present, in this column, a lengthy examination, by Paul Begg, of the infamous incident from the First World War in which cloud-UFOs allegedly kidnapped a whole regiment. This mysterious disappearance of a large number of men, apparently well witnessed, has been told and retold by many esteemed UFO and Fortean writers, and so cannot be dismissed lightly.

That Paul was able to clear up the main misunderstandings in this tale shows the virtue of checking back to original or contemporary sources where possible. It is a shame that a small band of dedicated researchers, eager to probe the genuine mysteries that abound in the records and archives, have to first spend precious time in correcting the sloppy or non-existent research of the more popular authors who preceded them. There are so many errors and sheer fabrications in current circulation that such a suspicious and slow progress through the minefield of modern mysteries is unfortunately necessary, as, at any step, an unchecked fact or story may treacherously blow up in our own faces.

However, in this case, when the event is restored to verisimilitude, we are no nearer an answer, for in clearing up one mystery, Paul has uncovered other, more original, unanswered questions.

THE FIRST-FOURTH NORFOLK & THE KIDNAPPING CLOUD

by Paul Begg

The disappearance of the First-Fourth Norfolk 'Regiment', allegedly on 21 August 1915, during the Dardanelles Campaign, has been told many times, usually with reference to the following signed affidavit:

'The following is an account of a strange incident that happened on . . . [see note 1] . . . in the morning during the severest and final period of the fighting which took place on Hill 60, Suvla Bay, ANZAC.

The day broke clear, without a cloud in sight, as any beautiful Mediterranean day could be expected to be. The exception, however, was a number of perhaps six or eight 'loaf-of-bread' shaped clouds — all shaped exactly alike — which were hovering over Hill 60. It was noticed that, in spite of a four or five mile an hour breeze from the south, these clouds did not alter their position in any shape or form, nor did they drift away under the influence of the breeze. They were hovering at an elevation of about 60 degrees as seen from our observation point 500 feet up. Also, stationary and resting on the ground right underneath this group of clouds was a similar cloud in shape, measuring about 800 feet in length, 220 feet in height and 200 feet in width. This cloud was absolutely dense, solid looking in structure, and positioned about 14 to 18 chains from the fighting in British-held territory. All this was observed by 22 men of No. 3 Section of No. 1 Field Company, New Zealand Engineers, including myself, from our trenches on Rhododendron Spur, approximately 2,500 yards south-west of the cloud on the ground. Our vantage point was overlooking Hill 60 by about 300 feet. As it turned out later, this singular cloud was straddling a dry creek bed or sunken road (Kaiajik Dere) and we had a perfect view of the cloud's sides and ends as it rested on the ground. Its colour was a light grey, as was the colour of the other clouds.

A British Regiment, the First-Fourth Norfolk, of several hundred men, was seen marching up this sunken road or creek towards Hill 60. However, when they arrived at this cloud, they marched straight into it, with no hesitation, but no-one ever came out to deploy and fight at Hill 60. About an hour later, after the last of the file had disappeared into it, this cloud very unobtrusively lifted off the ground and, like any cloud or fog would, rose slowly until it joined the other similar clouds which were mentioned in the beginning of this account. On viewing them again, they all looked alike 'as peas in a pod'. All this time, the clouds had been hovering in the same place, but as soon as the singular cloud had risen to their level, they all moved away northward, i.e., towards Thrace (Bulgaria). In a matter of three quarters of an hour they had all disappeared from view.

The Regiment mentioned is posted as missing or 'wiped out' and on Turkey surrendering in 1918, the first thing Britain demanded of Turkey was the return of this Regiment. Turkey replied that she had neither captured this Regiment, nor made contact with it, and did not know that it existed. A British Regiment in 1914-1918 consisted of any number between 800 and 4,000 men. Those who observed this incident vouch for the fact that Turkey never captured the regiment nor made contact with it.

We, the undersigned, although late in time, that is the 50th Jubilee of the ANZAC landing, declare that the above described incident is true in every word.

Signed by witnesses:
4/165 Sapper F. Reichardt, Matata, Bay of Plenty.
13/416 Sapper R. Newnes, 157 King Street, Cambridge.
J.L. Newman, 75 Freyburg Street, Octumoctai, Tauranga.' [1]

It is further claimed by Steiger and Whritenour, that a complete statement of the disappearance is recorded in an official history of the Gallipoli Campaign:

'They (the First-Fourth Norfolk Regiment) were swallowed up by an unseasonable fog. This fog reflected the sun's rays in such a manner that artillery observers were dazzled by its brilliance and were unable to fire in support. The two hundred and fifty men were never seen or heard of again'. [2]

The story was told on the occasion of the 50th Jubilee of the ANZAC landing, in fact at an old comrades at arms reunion on April 25, 1965 by Sapper Reichardt, who subsequently got two friends and fellow witnesses to sign the affidavit testifying to the truth of the story. This affidavit was printed first in the New Zealand journal *Spaceview* [1], reprinted 6 months later in the American magazine *Flying Saucers* [3], and thereafter reprinted in full or quoted by many noted UFO writers – Brad Steiger [2, 4], Jacques Vallée [5], John Keel [6], Ralph Blum [7], Brinsley Le Poer Trench [8], Charles Berlitz [9] – and others. (There is some suggestion that the tale has a pre-*Spaceview* origin, but I have been unable to trace it.) [10].

Now for the big shock! To begin with, the First-Fourth Norfolk was not – repeat, *not* – a Regiment; it was a battalion within the Royal Norfolk Regiment. That it has been consistently called a Regiment is evidence that not one of the many writers who have told the tale have bothered to check the facts. Secondly, the 1/4th did not disappear at Gallipoli in August 1915 or at any time or place thereafter. Evidence of their existence during and after August can be found at the Imperial War Museum in London, where you can see a run of manuscripts, battalion orders and messages, even a ration indent for 545 men, all dated August 30 [11]. And in December 1915 the 1/4th were evacuated to Egypt to rebuild strength and numbers before being sent to another theatre of war.

However, whilst the 1/4th Norfolk did not vanish, it is an undisputed fact that the sister battalion, the First-Fifth Norfolk did – but not on the date or in the manner ascribed to the 1/4th. If Reichardt saw any Norfolk vanish, they could only have been from the 1/5th – so perhaps there could be some truth in his incredible tale. On, then, to mystery number two: The First-*Fifth* Norfolk.

Before progressing further it will be of value if we get the feel of and the background to this event [12]. The geography first: The Aegean is connected to the Sea of Marmara by the Dardanelles (the ancient Hellespont), a long narrow channel extending for about 40 miles along the Gallipoli Peninsula. Running for about a mile along the west coast of the Peninsula is Suvla Bay, beyond which is a large Salt Lake (dry in summer and reflecting the sun in a harsh glare), and beyond that Suvla Plain.

From the end of April until October the sun burns down relentlessly; the flowers fade, the grass withers, and the earth is turned a scorched yellow-brown. The hard, sun-baked ground of Suvla Plain was dissected by dried water courses and broken here and there by a few stunted olive trees. In the distance a semi-circle of bleak hills stretch from north to south, giving Suvla Plain the appearance of a giant natural arena. To the north is Kiretch Tepe, to the east the twin heights of Kavak Tepe and Tekke Tepe, and to the south the Sari Bair range.

Sari Bair, Turkish for 'Yellow Ridge', has three summits, all about 1000 feet high and separated from one another by about ½-mile of undulating crest line. The northern peak is called Koya Chemen Tepe, the next is Besim Tepe (known to the British as Hill Q), and the third is Chunuk Bair. About ½-mile to the north of Chunuk Bair is Hill 60, the small hillock towards which Reichardt claims the Norfolk were marching when they vanished. A further 3 miles to the north is a cultivated area known as Kuchuk Anafarta Ova, the scene of the 1/5 Norfolk's disappearance.

The most practical route to the summit of Chunuk Bair is along a spur which the Allies called Rhododendron Spur after the red flowers which blazed along it during the early days of the campaign. It was on this spur that Reichardt claims to have been entrenched when he witnessed the disappearance.

Now let's turn our attention to the events leading up to the First-Fifth's disappearance.

When the Norfolk battalions (1/4th and 1/5th) arrived at Suvla on August 10 (as part of the 163rd Brigade of the 54th Division) the Allies were on the verge of defeat and would in fact evacuate the Peninsula before December. However, whilst it was not normal practice to plunge 'green' troops into battle without first giving them time in a quiet sector to grow accustomed to combat, Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, believed that a major offensive by fresh troops would turn the tide of the campaign. He envisaged a bold, sweeping assault on Kavak Tepe and Tekke Tepe, the twin heights forming the central slice of the mountains dominating Suvla Plain, and proposed that on August 12, the 163rd Brigade should advance and clear the cultivated area Kuchuk Anafarta Ova of enemy snipers. During the night the rest of the Division would advance as far as the foothills of Kavak and Tekke Tepe, where they would wait until dawn on August 13, then attack the mountain heights.

At 4.45 pm on August 12, 1915, the Brigade began their advance. Sir Ian Hamilton later described what happened in a dispatch to Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War:

'In the course of the fight . . . there happened a very mysterious thing . . . The First-Fifth Norfolks were on the right of the line, and found themselves for the moment less strongly opposed than the rest of the brigade. Against the yielding forces of the enemy, Colonel Sir H. Beauchamp, a bold, self-confident officer, eagerly pressed forward, followed by the best part of the battalion. The fighting grew hotter, and the ground became

more wooded and broken . . . But the Colonel, with 16 officers and 250 men, still kept pushing on, driving the enemy before him . . . Nothing more was seen or heard of any of them. They charged into the forest and were lost to sight or sound. Not one of them ever came back [13].'

267 men – vanished! Could these have been the men Reichardt saw kidnapped by a strange cloud?

This disappearance of 267 members of the 1/5th Norfolk (not even the battalion you will note) is a well documented event and there are a number of readily available accounts [12] including a substantially accurate version by Harold T. Wilkins [14], and it is well known that they did not totally vanish.

In 1919 a soldier of the occupation forces was touring the battlefield when he found a badge of the Royal Norfolk Regiment. Following inquiries it was learned that a Turkish farmer, returning to his property after the fighting, found the decomposing bodies of British soldiers strewn over his land, many within his farmhouse. He dumped the bodies in a nearby ravine, where they were later found.

Writing on September 23, 1919, the officer commanding the Graves Registration Unit in Gallipoli said: *'We have found the 5th Norfolk' [15].*

He was slightly premature. Of the 180 bodies found, only 122 were 1/5th Norfolk, and only two could be positively identified, 240436 Cpl J.A. Barnaby and 1028 Pte W. Carter (not Cotter as stated in the *History of the Norfolk Regiment* and elsewhere [15, 16]. They are buried along with 114 unidentified Norfolk in Anzac Cemetary (6 bodies would appear to have been buried elsewhere) and their names recorded on the Helles Memorial [16].

Only 122 of 266 men were found, therefore more than half of those who vanished remain unaccounted for. Could *these* have been the men seen by Reichardt? Before answering that question we should perhaps turn our attention to the New Zealanders, upon whose credibility the whole story of the kidnapping cloud is based.

Who was Reichardt? Sapper 4/165A Frederick Reichardt was a sailor enlisted in the United Kingdom Section of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on October 8, 1915, as a member of No. 3 Section, First Divisional Field Company, New Zealand Engineers, and he embarked for Gallipoli on April 12, 1915.

According to the *War Diary* of the First Divisional Field Company [17], Reichardt's Section was transferred to Rhododenron Spur, on August 13, Therefore, Reichardt was *not* on the Spur when the 1/5th attacked the day before. However, he could have been sent there during the afternoon of the 12th in order to begin work there at dawn on the 13th [18].

Part of the Royal Norfolk Regiment *did* vanish during that month but Reichardt named the wrong battalion (1/4th) and the wrong date (August 21). Is it possible that those Norfolk, disorientated and tired, totally new to Gallipoli and unfamiliar with the terrain, began marching towards Hill 60 and marched into a cloud. Reichardt was there, we were not. Are we justified in calling him a liar?

Mr I.C. MacGibbon, of the New Zealand Defence Liaison Office, has phrased the pertinent central issues, in his letter of 27 December 1974:

'No-one has been able to explain the disappearance of the 1/5th Norfolks, which certainly occurred. If Reichardt and his fellow Gallipoli veterans saw a 'bread-shaped cloud of light grey colour' lower itself into the path of the 1/5th Norfolks, why did they wait until 1965 before signing an affidavit to this effect? Would it not have been in order to have reported such an unusual occurrence to an officer at the time? or at least when the mystery could not be solved later? Possibly, however, they may have feared ridicule'. [18]

The strange 'kidnapping' cloud is not the only solution to the fate of the 1/5th Norfolk. We know that two, a Captain Coxon and Lieutenant C.S. Fawkes, were taken prisoner and spent the rest of the war in captivity in Asia Minor [11]. Other Norfolk men no doubt suffered a similar fate and Turkish prison camps being notorious for their appalling conditions, it is unlikely that many sick or wounded men would have survived. Moreover, conditions generally at Gallipoli were disgusting. An example is the often mentioned fact that bodies lay about in great numbers and burial was rudimentary at best. It was not uncommon to feel the squelching softness of a hastily buried body underfoot or see the face or hands of a former comrade protruding from the ground. In short, the loss of over 100 men is far from remarkable! And strangely, many of the missing were probably never missing at all. Sir Ian Hamilton says [13] that after darkness fell many of those involved in the advance returned to camp having lost contact with their comrades during the heat of battle.

Is Reichardt's story complete fabrication? I think not. One of the dates given by Reichardt, August 21, is of particular interest. So, too, is the entry in the unspecified official history of the Gallipoli Campaign, regarding the strange meteorological phenomenon, alluded to by Steiger and Whritenour [2].

None of the official reports consulted by the present writer contain the alleged entry, but the following extract can be found in *The Final Report* of the Dardanelles Commission [13]:

'By some freak of nature Suvla Bay and Plain were wrapped in a strange mist . . . We had reckoned on the enemy's gunners being blinded by the declining sun'.

The similarity between this account and the one in the 'official history' will not pass unnoticed and it is surely more than mere coincidence that it appears on the page opposite the account of the Norfolk's August 12th advance. The entry refers to a totally unexpected mist which was unseasonable but in all other ways perfectly normal, which descended during the afternoon of August 21, the day of the greatest offensive (in terms of numbers) ever fought at Gallipoli. That afternoon, shortly before dark, Sir John Milbanke, V.C., led the Sherwood Rangers into the swirling, grey mist. The Turks, situated above the mist, saw the advance and annihilated the Sherwood Rangers.

Is it too much to suppose that Frederick Reichhardt, on the occasion of an old comrades reunion and looking back over 50 years, confused the disappearance of the 1/5th Norfolk with the unseasonable mist and the destruction of the Sherwood Rangers? Frankly, I believe that this is most likely what happened.

In the final analysis, however, we don't know what happened to the 1/5th, but people do vanish in wartime. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's memorials around the world bear the names of 771,982 Commonwealth dead of the two world wars who have no known grave [16]. When faced with such staggering numbers is the fate of 145 missing in one of the worst theatres of war imaginable really all that mysterious?

Paul Begg – 1978.

References

1) 'A Day to Remember in August 1915', *Spaceview* No. 45 (Sept. 1965), Henderson, New Zealand. There is some confusion concerning the precise date of the alleged kidnapping. The article gives nothing more precise than 'August 1915' despite alluding to 'the above date'. Vallee (see note 5) substitutes for these words a dateline 'Gallipoli, August 28, 1915', and then confuses the issue by citing the August 21 date. No-one seems really certain. Also, most accounts that retell the story place the kidnapping 'at' Anzac. ANZAC is not a place but an acronym for Australia and New Zealand Army Corps.

2) Brad Steiger & Joan Whritenour; *Flying Saucers are Hostile* (Universal-Tandem, London, 1967), p57f.

3) *Flying Saucers* No. 46 (March 1966); Palmer Publications Inc., Amhurst, Wisconsin.

4) Brad Steiger; *Strangers from the Sky,* (Tandem, London, 1966).

5) Jaques Vallee; *Passport to Magonia* (Henry Regnery Co, Chicago, 1969); (Neville Spearman, London, 1970) pp98-100; (Tandem, London, 1975).

6) John Keel; *Our Haunted Planet* (Fawcett, Greenwich, Conn, 1971) p201; (Neville Spearman, London, 1971); (Futura, London, 1975).

7) Ralph & Judy Blum; *Beyond Earth,* (Bantam, NY, 1972) pp61-64; (Phillips Publishing Co, Springfield, Mass, 1974) (Corgi, London, 1974).

8) Brinsley Le Poer Trench; *Mysterious Visitors* (Pan, London, 1973); (JM Dent, Canada, 1973).

9) Charles Berlitz; *Without a Trace* (Doubleday, NY, 1977); (Souvenir Press, London, 1977) pp149-151.

10) [Editor's note – Both Mr DB Nash (see note 11) and myself feel that the whole myth may have inadvertently begun with Harold T Wilkins' book (see note 14). Written in 1958, Wilkins correctly summarises the fate of the 1/5th Norfolks but makes no mention of UFOs here. However, as his later books *do* deal with UFOs, Wilkins' Fortean scholarship brought his researches to the attention of the UFO world. Clearly this supposition is not proved, and the true origin of this classic 'UFO-kidnap' story has yet to be tracked down to its . . er . . liar!]

11) *The Vanishing Norfolks* (Information Sheet No 6; Imperial War Museum, revised November 1977). Also, correspondence between Mr DB Nash, Deputy Head of the Imperial War Museum's Department of Printed Books and the author, and Bob Rickard, Editor of *Fortean Times.*

12) Many sources were used for background information but the following were most useful on the Norfolks' case:
Brig. Gen. CF Aspinal-Oglander; *Official History of the War, Military Operations, Gallipoli* vol 2 (Heineman, London, 1932).
Tim Carew; *The Royal Norfolk Regiment: The 9th Regiment of Foot* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1967).
Robert R James; *Gallipoli* (Batsford, London, 1965); (Pan, London, 1974).
The Times History of the War vol. 2 (The Times, London 1916).

13) *Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission,* Cmd 371 (HMSO, London, 1917).

14) Harold T Wilkins; *Strange Mysteries of Time and Space* (Ace, NY, 1958) p159.

15) *History of the Norfolk Regiment.*

16) Commonwealth War Graves Commission; letter (25 January 1974) to author.

17) *War Diary, 1st Field Company,* War History WA 61/1 (National Archives, Wellington, New Zealand).

18) New Zealand Ministry of Defence; letters (16 Dec 1974, 26 March 1975) to the author from Mr. I.C. MacGibbon to whom special thanks are offered.
Mr MacGibbon did attempt to locate Reichardt, but Reichardt did not attend later reunions. MacGibbon could not trace him, so presumed him to be dead.
[The Editor would like to acknowledge here the efforts of the few other researchers, known to him, who attempted to untangle this enigma – Roger Sandell, Nigel Watson, and Ron Dobbins, who pointed out (in a letter to *INFO,* 30 June 1973) that the case was also touted by Edwards, Warren and Otto Binder, the last of whom changed the location to *Luvia Bay, Australia* (!), and upped the numbers missing to a round 1000!]

MERMAIDS

'Recently', a Philipino fisherman claimed to have met a mermaid on a moonlit night, and she helped him "secure a bountiful catch." Jacinto Fetalvero, 41, said she was very beautiful, with "amiable bluish eyes, reddish cheeks and greenish scales on her tail." But alas little more is known - since letting that much slip, Jacinto has become the butt of jokes and media curiosity, and declines to say any more. Melbourne Sun

(Australia) 15 July 1978 (Cr: Has Thomas)

This recalled another recent 'mermaid' note. According to the Pretoria News (South Africa) 20 December 1977, a mermaid had taken up residence in a storm-sewer in the Libala Stage III township, Lusaka, in Zambia. It was first spotted in the full drains - it was the rainy season - by children playing nearby, and soon a large crowd gathered. They told the reporter that the creature appeared to be "a European woman from the waist up, while the rest of her body was shaped like the back end of a fish, and covered with scales." One girl said the mermaid was "very pretty" with earrings and red bangles on her arms. Then the story gets confusing...another witness said he had seen the mermaid "run out of a nearby house toward the sewer. It dug a deep hole in the ditch where it hid, but surfaced later in the day much to the bewilderment of onlookers." The report ends with a description of local wags trying to figure out how to run with their legs tied together and fins glued to their shoes! (Cr: Chris J Holtzhausen) One has to wonder how a mermaid, whether mystery animal or mythical, relates to the imagination of a land-locked African state. Anyway, this introduces two other African oddities...

AMIN'S TALKING TORTOISE

A UPI release (24 Aug) said that "thousands of Ugandans" believed that there was a tortoise currently padding around the countryside prophesying trouble for Idi Amin. In fact the story worried the Ugandan government so much that officials, police, security chiefs and loyal chiefs held several crisis meetings and issued a statement which denounced the entire population as "always drunk with rumours." And 'Big Daddy' himself held a press conference in which he threatened to put anyone trading in such rumours before a firing squad.

According to the Uganda government's own report, the mysterious 'enfundu'(tortoise) waddled into a local village police station and demanded to be taken to the town of Jinja, on the River Nile and just outside Kampala. Once there it asked for a private audience with the provincial governor and police commissioner, having a message for their ears only. Whether there was any possible truth to the existence of such a magical oracle or not, the two officials quite naturally wanted to avoid a view of Amin's fridge from the inside or having their vitals garnish his grizzly meals - they hastily denounced and denied the rumours. The last we hear of the tortoise is that it was "under arrest" in Kampala jail - but the jailors, too, were quick to deny it! This altogether weird story is typical of Amin's influence on Uganda - he is virtually a shaman-warrior to his people, or at least to himself, having been divinely elected in a vision, and through a series of amazing escapes from attempted assassinations now firmly believes his prophesied invulnerability.

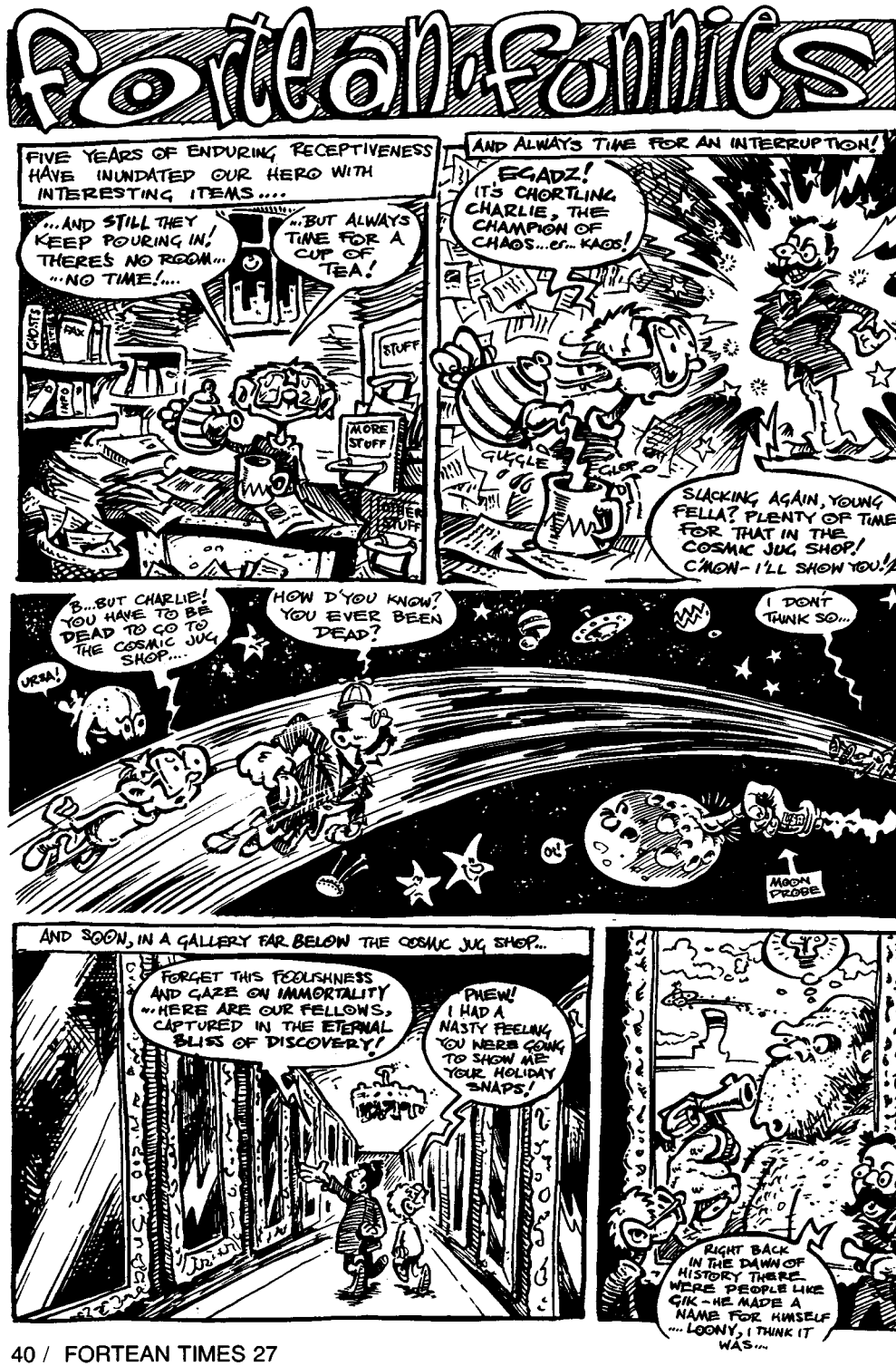
One has to wonder too about the similarity with the Dogon myth of the beings from Sirius - I imagine one small hard-backed emmisary, rebuffed in his attempts to get Amin to 'cool it', getting more than he bargained for. Over the same period as the tortoise-rumour Amin himself shot an enraged hippo that attacked his boat as he sailed with his children. He then ordered all government officials to view the carcase, to be preserved at his residence - thus demonstrating once again his dominion over the powers of nature! London Evening Standard 24 August 1978; Daily Express, Daily Telegraph, Guardian 25 August 1978; St Louis Post-Dispatch (MO) 27 August 1978 (Cr: Paul Sieveking, Mark A Hall.)

THE DICTATOR & THE MERCENARY - a fable

Shortly after (28 days) the islands (3 of the Comoro group, between Africa & Madagascar) declared their independence (of France) a man (Ali Soilih) declared himself president with the help of a mercenary (Frenchman Colonel Bob Denard) and set about his idea of revolution, destroying all machinery, raising a thug army, bankrupting the economy, taking any woman he wanted and generally becoming a pain in his subjects' collective arse. A mere 34 months was all they could take, and on 13 May 1978 the same mercenary again invaded the head island, Moroni (yes, Moroni, you morons!), but this time in the pay of those who thought the man should go - quickly.

Fifteen days later the man was dead - uh, "shot while trying to escape." Now we come to the funny-business. A year earlier, a witchdoctor told the man that he could only be killed by a man with a dog - so the man, superstitious to the last, had every dog on the island killed. Now it's a fact that when the mercenary led his small force ashore in their secret midnight assault he had with him his mascot - an Alsation dog! The motif here is instantly recognizable from the legends of all cultures, from the prophecy of the half-shod Jason to Herod's massacre of the innocents. Who says myth is dead! Sunday Times 11 June 1978.

RJMR


Fortean Fonnics
FIVE YEARS OF ENDURING RECEPTIVENESS HAVE INUNDATED OUR HERO WITH INTERESTING ITEMS....
...AND STILL THEY KEEP POURING IN! THERES NO ROOM... ...NO TIME!....
...BUT ALWAYS TIME FOR A CUP OF TEA!
GHOSTS
FAX
INFO
STUFF
MORE STUFF
OTHER STUFF
AND ALWAYS TIME FOR AN INTERRUPTION!
EGADZ! IT'S CHORTLING CHARLIE, THE CHAMPION OF CHAOS...er... KAOS!
GUGGLE
GLOP
SLACKING AGAIN, YOUNG FELLA? PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAT IN THE COSMIC JUG SHOP! C'MON- I'LL SHOW YOU!
B...BUT CHARLIE! YOU HAVE TO BE DEAD TO GO TO THE COSMIC JUG SHOP....
HOW D'YOU KNOW? YOU EVER BEEN DEAD?
I DON'T THINK SO...
URSA!
OH!
MOON PROBE
AND SOON, IN A GALLERY FAR BELOW THE COSMIC JUG SHOP...
FORGET THIS FOOLISHNESS AND GAZE ON IMMORTALITY ...HERE ARE OUR FELLOWS, CAPTURED IN THE ETERNAL BLISS OF DISCOVERY!
PHEW! I HAD A NASTY FEELING YOU WERE GOING TO SHOW ME YOUR HOLIDAY SNAPS!
RIGHT BACK IN THE DAWN OF HISTORY THERE WERE PEOPLE LIKE GIK-HE MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF .... LOONY, I THINK IT WAS....

AND PHARAOH RHAMITUB MYNOSES... A FORGOTTEN GENIUS...
I SEE YOUR POINT...!
BUT THEN YOU'RE PROBLY NOT INTERESTED IN THE PAST.....
...BUT... BUT...
....WHEN THE FUTURE YAWNS BEFORE YOU...!
MAN ATE INNER
THE TWIN BOXES
SHOE FALL IN BRONX
COMPUTERS! DATA-PROCESSING! TOO ORGANISED FOR ME, BUT IT'S ONE WAY TO GET THE ANSWER...
SO THERE IS AN ANSWER!!
URSH
K0-4
ALL DEPENDS... WHAT'S THE QUESTION?
WE KNOW!
WRIT BY STEVE MOORE
DRAWN BY HUNT EMERSON
BY THE WAY... YOUR CUP RUNNETH OVER! TOODLE-PIP...!

Predictions are ten-a-penny... or perhaps a little more expensive if they come from professional psychics and astrologers such as those consulted regularly by magazines like the National Enquirer at the beginning of each year. Looking back through our files, all we can say is that the famous have a remarkable talent for failure. So instead we draw our tales from humbler seers...

Plane-crashes: Perhaps the most remarkable story of the last couple of years is that of Lee Fried, an 18-year-old student at Duke University, N. Carolina. On 20th March 1977, he wrote some predictions on a card, put it in a wax sealed envelope, and had it locked in the office of university president Terry Sandford. On the 28th, with live TV coverage, the envelope was opened. Here's how Lee shaped up:

Boeing 747s crash, 583 dead. (March 27th, 2 Boeings crashed at Tenerife. Our clippings say Lee was wrong by 6 deaths...but the Guinness Book of Records gives the figure of 582),N. Carolina U. would lose the last basketball match of the season to Marquette, 68-58 (they lost 67-59), A TV hostess would wear a lavender outfit with cream blouse and silver earrings (she did), and the Supreme Court would hear 4 cases on capital punishment (right again). We only seem to have British sources for this (Daily Mail 1 Apr 77, S. Express 3 Apr 77, Weekly News 16 Apr 77. Cr: P Hope-Evans, P Roberts), short of details on how Lee arrived at his conclusions, but he claims he was just testing himself!

Another plane-crash prediction shows one of the famous getting it right for a change: 'psychic-astrologer' Jack Gillen predicted an aircrash at Evansville, Ind., on 12th December 1977. He made his prediction on a Florida radio station on 31 Oct, and repeated it on another radio show on 22 Nov. On 13th December (strange how these prognostics are frequently one out) a DC-3 crashed at Evansville, killing all 29 aboard. (National Enquirer, 14 Mar 78)

The New York City blackout: Time, 25 July 77 (Cr: Ion Will) has the following wondrous little tale: On the prior Tuesday, a small man with white hair and twinkling eyes turned up at the offices of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and offered to predict Thursday's headline. He gave his name only as Rogé (pron: Ro-jay), 52 yrs old, an ex-newsman come from Salinas, California,to attend a magicians' conference. He sealed his prediction in 5 envelopes. When Editor Stephen Green opened the envelopes on the Thursday morning, in Roge's presence, he found written 'Massive Power Blackout hits New York City Area' which, of course, was exactly the same as his headline...

From out the mouth of babes: From the old to the young...when Cassy Holmes of Harborough Rd, Sheffield said relatives were about to arrive, her mother always put the kettle on...because little Cassy was always right. We say 'was' merely because our source is rather old (Weekly News 3 May 75, Cr N Watson) and have no news of her since. Cassy, at the time, was five years old, and had already been in the predict-

ion business then for 3 years. Amongst her achievements: indicating that a picture would fall off the wall 2 minutes before it did; predicting the death of her grandfather's best friend, and the crash of a plane carrying Vietnamese orphans. Apart from prescience, Cassy knew quite a lot of science, too. She explained how blood carries oxygen to the brain with words her parents couldn't even pronounce! Like all good prophetesses, Cassy said nothing of how she did it, except she 'just knew it'.

Dreams: Shop-girl Mary Redding, 24, of Stirchley, Birmingham, dreamed she was going to win the football pools. I have several crumbling tomes of popular dream interpretation here, and seekers of useless wisdom might care to know that all of them agree that to dream of winning at gambling is a contrary dream indicating loss and lack of success. Not for Mary...5 days later, she picked up a cheque for £132,631 from Vernon's Pools. (D.Mirror, 17 July 75).

Another dreamer is Mrs Gwen Bridgland of Barrow-in-Furness, whose predictions were investigated by Dr John Beloff, a psychologist from Edinburgh University. On 2 Sept 1970, she dreamed of being on a crowded railway station platform, and seeing a man jump in front of a train with fatal results. In the dream, she said to her husband 'It's probably for the best anyway, Geoff, because the man was wanted for a sex murder'. On the 5th, she sent the dream to Beloff. On the 16th, a girl was sexually assaulted and murdered in Broxbourne, Herts. On the 19th, the man believed to have killed her died under a train. She also claims to have dreamed of being on a train which stopped, and men unloaded vast amounts of paper money; a few days later came the Great Train Robbery. This one appears to have occurred before she was working with Dr Beloff, however. Reveille 4 Oct 74. (Cr: N Watson)

The same source also tells of 28-yr-old American Shawn Robbins, who dreamed in February 74 that a large jet bound for London would crash in March or May, killing hundreds and leaving no survivors; and that a member of the US diplomatic service and his wife would die...though from the source it is uncertain whether these events were linked in the prediction. Nonetheless, 12 days later, on 3 Mar 74, a DC-10 on a Paris to London flight crashed in France, killing all 346 aboard; and including US Cultural Attaché Wayne Wilcox and his wife.

I noted above how some predictions are one out: to finish up, here's another with one detail wrong...thankfully for all concerned.

Mrs Frances Whaley, of Kay Gardens, Cockenzie, E.Lothian, Scotland, dreamed that her daughter Byrnice had toothache. In the dream, she phoned around and found a dentist in Musselburgh who could treat her. Arriving, she found the place was an old house with an ornate ceiling in the waiting room. Taking Byrnice to a toilet down a gloomy passage, she noticed black and white 'chessboard' lino on the floor, a bath with ornate feet. Still dreaming, Mrs Whaley returned to the waiting room while Byrnice went into the surgery. A friend came in and they chatted until the waiting room door opened and the dentist entered. He said 'I'm sorry, but your daughter has died under gas'. Mrs Whaley woke up sobbing.

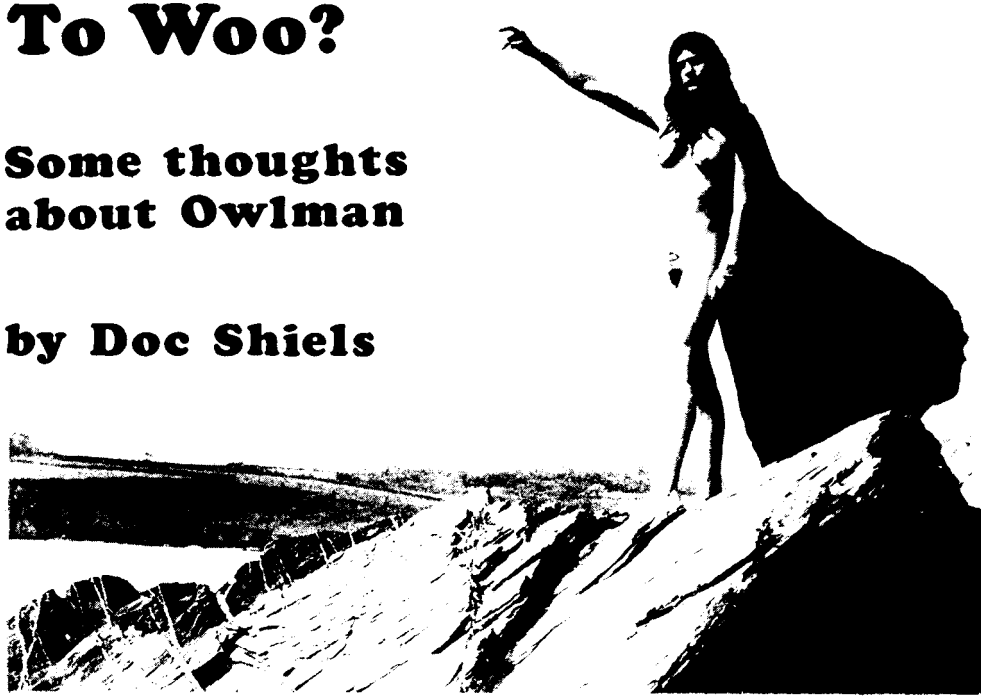
And she forgot about it until 'months later', when Byrnice woke up with terrible toothache. She phoned around...the only dentist who could give her a quick appointment was in Musselburgh. It was of course, an old house: the waiting room had an ornate ceiling, the toilet black and white lino. And then, as a friend came in and they chatted, she realised her dream was coming true. Then the door opened, and the dentist said 'I'm sorry...I can't take out Byrnice's tooth. She's got a cold.' Mrs Whalen grabbed Byrnice and fled...though for the life of me I can't understand why she didn't do so sooner! And for those who like the loose ends tied up, Byrnice's tooth was taken out 2 days later...by another dentist. (Sunday Post, 1 June 75. Cr: N Watson)

SM.

To Wit!
To Woo?

Some thoughts about Owlman

by Doc Shiels



In the Foreword to the catalogue of the 1942 Surrealist Exhibition in New York, Robert Allerton Parker pointed out the importance of the work of Charles Fort in relation to Surrealism. A sharp observation, methinks. Fortean reality *is* sur-reality, super-reality.

The Surrealist artists were and are magicians, shamans, tricksters, visionaries, adventurers, prophets, jokers, dreamers . . . they know a thing or two more, about the phenomenal pluriverse, than most ufologists, psychical investigators and monster hunters. Nature makes a habit of imitating art, and supernature often cocks an eye towards the super-real.

One of these fine days I will publish a lengthy text (already half-written) concerning the clues contained in Surrealist painting, films and literature, which relate, directly, to many aspects of Fortean phenomena. For now, let me concentrate on just one example . . . the Owlman.

Now I know the Owlman, as seen by young girls and Jungian psychologists, is a symbol of the negative animus; I know his first cousins pop up in the mythology and demonology of many cultures; and I know he flits through the pages of the comic-books and SF mags; but I also know that some of the most significant pointers towards an understanding of this weird winged thing are to be found in the statements and paintings of Max Ernst.

In 1906, at the age of fifteen, Ernst found his favourite pet, a cockatoo, dead and, at that very moment of this discovery, his father announced the birth of his baby sister. "The perturbation of the youth was so enormous that he fainted. A series of mystical crises, fits of hysteria, exaltations and depressions followed," wrote Ernst [1] . . . accompanied by a confusion between humans and birds. Following this interesting happening, young Max began his "excursions in the world of marvels, chimeras, phantoms, poets, monsters, birds, women, magi, trees, eroticism, stones" etc. You see? Already we are in Owlman territory.

In 1924, Max Ernst painted a picture entitled *Two Children are Menaced by a Nightingale*. Marcel Jean describes it as "the model of an hallucination". [2] It is a beautifully disquieting painting with an authentic atmosphere of strangeness about it. The nightingale threatens more than two, and by daylight.

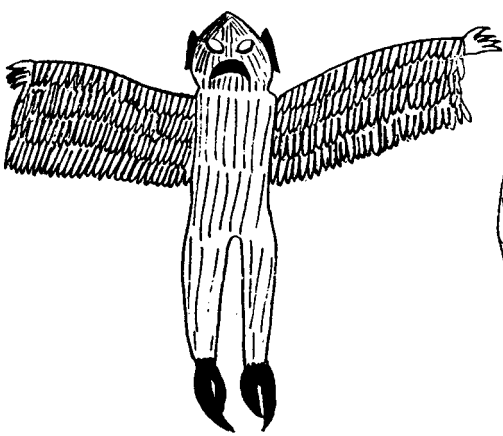
"Men in ancient times," writes Marcel Jean, "believed that insects and serpents sprang spontaneously from the damp earth; Ernst gives a positive force to this old illusion: in his hands, pictorial material becomes alive and gives birth to new reptiles, mantises and birds of prey."

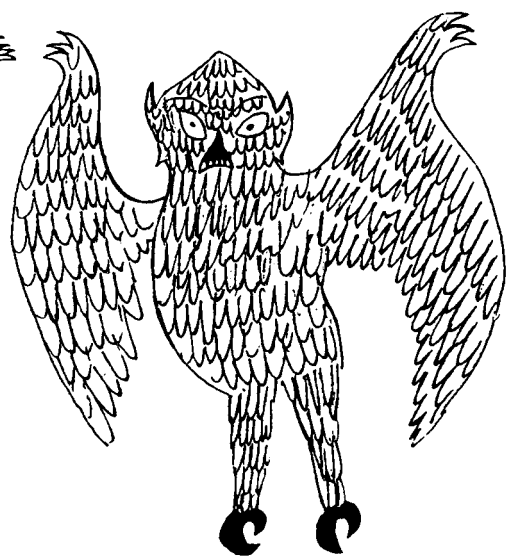
In 1941, Ernst traced the image of an Owlman in the sand of the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, New Orleans. He was, by now, living with the American artist, Dorothea Tanning. Her paintings began to be

"haunted by little girls in rags, seemingly turned into demons by their journey 'through the looking glass' " [2] Ernst continued to paint monstrous man-bird images, and young girls were never too far away.

In 1976, the Owlman of Mawnan frightened several young girls. In 1978, he returned to the area and frightened several more. June Melling's drawing of the Owlman (see illustration) is a splendid Surrealist image which could have flown out of a Max Ernst collage . . . a dream figure, a kachina, a magical phantom. It is funny-peculiar and funny-haha; decorative, too, like a man dressed in a primitive ritual costume, fright-masked and frond-winged on the top half, but with neat narrow trousers and black pointed shoes on the lower. He becomes slightly more monstrous in the sketch drawn by Barbara Perry. Here he is dressed in a one-piece outfit with feathered wing-sleeves. The winkle pickers have turned into cloven hooves or crab-claws. Sally Chapman's drawing dehumanizes him further, into an almost heraldic image, with angry glaring eyes and pointed teeth . . . menacing.

In June, 1978, 16 year old Miss Opie saw the Owlman and described him as 'a monster, like a devil, flying up through the trees'.[3] The Surrealist, Francis Picabia, once said, 'The Devil follows me day





(Top) Based on a sketch by June Melling - see note 5. (Above left) Drawn by Barbara Perry - see note 6. (Above right) Drawn by Sally Chapman - see note 6. (Previous page) Doc's daughter, Kate, photographed on Mawnan Beach in an attempt to summon the Owlman (FPL).

and night because he is afraid of being alone.' Well said, Francis! In August, 1978, his owliness returned to be observed by a trio of French girls.[4] This time he was white in colour, with big round eyes and a gaping mouth. The word 'gaping' put me in mind of hungry young birds . . . ah, there's a curious connection, folks! Do I mean sex-starved pubescent girls or downy chicks (here we go again) opening wide for a fat juicy worm (what did I tell you?).

In the wee small hours of the morning of August 8th, I dreamed a most curious dream. I found myself sitting on a high branch of a tree, looking down on a moonlit clearing in the woods near Mawnan church. There, spread-eagled on the ground, lay a naked girl. There was a churring sound and, suddenly, the pale figure of the Owlman came floating through the trees at the edge of the clearing, directly facing me. The churring song grew louder and I knew that it came from the gaping mouth-beak of the creature. Its eyes were large and red, its ten foot wings moved in slow motion and clapped together behind its head. It remind me, instantly, of a huge Lovecraftian whippoorwill as drawn by Lee Brown Coye in an illustration for *The Dunwich Horror*. Then . . . "No!" shouted a man's voice." . . . you are wrong, it is mine. I am the owl-mirror." I can't remember the exact words, but the accent was German and the shouter was Max Ernst. He sat on a branch of my tree, slghtly above me. "Hello Max" I said, as if we'd been old friends for years.

The Owlman hovered three or four feet above the girl. She smiled and said "Hello" as if *they* had been old friends for years. "He thinks he's going to fuck her," said Max as the winged weird one floated above and between the girl's legs. "He can't," I thought, and said so . . . "he's no cock!" The girl laughed and the Owlman, curring fiercely, lifted his head and glared up at Max and me. It rose through the air, slowly, towards us, mouth gaping as if to swallow us and wings spread wide. "It's a cunt!" Max laughed . . . and that's exactly what it became—a gaping pink vagina between a pair of pale thighs. "That's a good trick," I thought. Then I fell out of the tree and woke up; so I don't know what happened to Max, but it must have been very interesting.

Interpretations? Well . . . I have a fair notion of my own libido, over which Freudian-minded readers will enjoy giggling. In recent weeks, one of my own teenage daughters has tried to bait the Owlman by waiting, sky-clad, in the woods (she was eventually discouraged from such experiments by a series of, possibly related, psychic backlashing 'accidents'). One evening in June we heard a strange churring song, like the trill of a nightjar. In the dream, Owlman first appeared to me as a large whippoorwill (an American name for the nightjar). This bird is also commonly known as the fern-owl or goat-sucker—names which evoke some significant imagery, like the fern-like wings of June Melling's Owlman. The name 'goat-sucker' conjures up thoughts of midnight witchery (and pink gaping mouths). Why was this innocent, insect-eating, little bird given such as emotive name? Has it, some time, been *seen* sucking goats? And were they she or *he-goats*? Max Ernst, or the dream Max Ernst, told me that I was 'wrong' to see the Owlman as a Lee Brown Coye whippoorwill. (Who's poor Will? Wilbur Whateley, perhaps?). He claimed the Owlman as his own, for he, Ernst, was the 'owl mirror' . . . reflective and reflexive, the magical 'looking glass' through which things can pass, the prankster, the Dadaist/Surrealist. Ernst's Owlman was not blessed with a feathery phallus. No cock, he. So Max, before this dreamer's very eyes, turned the winged gaper into a welcoming vulva. Why did I fall out of the tree? Maybe I was pushed, maybe I was taken aback, maybe I wasn't ready to become king. That owl-face-vagina image later reminded me of the Irish Sheelagh-na-Gig. . . those erotic carved figures, mouthless, with round staring eyes and exaggerated genitalia.

Whatever the owl-thing was or is, I fell out of the tree and thus avoided being wooed in the woods.

Doc Shiels—August 1978

NOTES

1) 'Some Data on the Youth of Max Ernst, as told by Himself'. In *Max Ernst: Beyond Painting* (Wittenborn Schultz, NY, 1948).

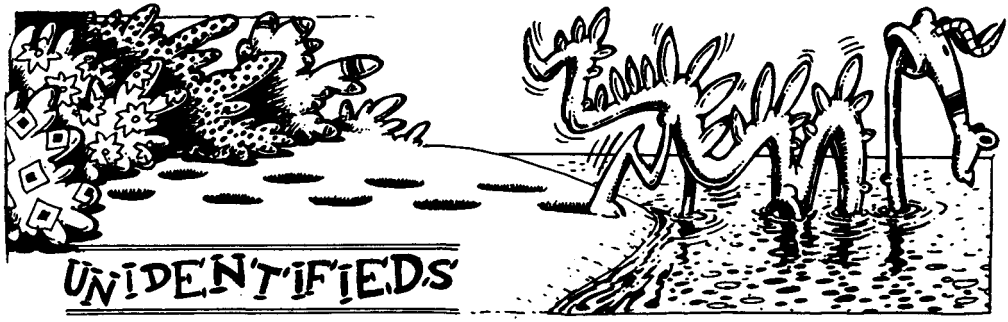
2) Marcel Jean, *The History of Surrealist Painting*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1960).

3) [Ed's note—Doc wrote to me, on 19 June 1978, to say that as a result of a small piece in the *Falmouth Packet* announcing Doc's intentions at that time to 'summon' up pixies, he had had several strange phone calls—the most relevant one was from a man calling himself 'Ken Opie' (more *Star Wars* links?) Opie being a fairly common name in the Falmouth/Truro part of Cornwall, Doc says. The man wouldn't leave his address or phone number, Doc continued, but "said he'd read the *Packet* piece and thought I might be interested in something his daughter had seen a couple of weeks ago (ie about 4 June) . . . "A monster, like a devil, flying up through the trees near old Mawnan Church"!!! He (and/or she) couldn't describe the monster except to say—and he repeated this—that it was "like a devil". I asked the age of his daughter, and he said "16", but wouldn't give me her name. I asked him what he was doing near the old church that morning, and he replied that "she wouldn't have been there on her own"!!! Then he rang off. It looks as if our Owlman is back!" Despite Doc's enthusiasm, he went on more cautiously, acknowledging that all the elements of this story could be found in the various published accounts of the earlier sightings (see notes 5 & 6), and from the news coverage of Doc's adventures. Curiously, although the *Packet* item was about a fairy or pixie summoning experiment, neither of Doc's anonymous callers mentioned the Little Folk!]

4) [Ed's note—Another letter from Doc, dated 6 August 1978, said that on Wednesday 2 August, Owlman was seen again near Mawnan church, this time by three young French girls. The landlady of the Penzance boarding house where the girls were staying told Doc that the girls had been frightened by something 'very big, like a great big furry bird," and that it was white with "a gaping mouth and big round eyes". It was "up in a tree, then went up higher and disappeared." That was all the landlady could tell, so Doc left word for the girls to ring him—but, as is the tantalizing way of weird phenomena, they never did. Several weeks later Doc wrote, appropriately: "Not a dicky bird (!) from the French girls yet." It's worth noting that during this period there were several UFO sightings of the lights-in-the-sky type—but we'll give the details some other time.]

5) Drawing reproduced from FT16p19, which also gives June Melling's story.

6) Drawing reproduced from FT17p17, which also gives the girls' stories.



Sightings of monsters and unidentified animals continue at the usual pace, and we don't really have room for them all this issue - so, Nessie and some others will have to wait until next time, while we just mention a few very interesting and urgent items.

WATER MONSTERS

Perhaps it was inevitable? Less than 2 weeks after your editor, Ion Will, John Michell and Steve Moore made a phenomenal trip to Fortfest 78 in Washington DC, there were a series of sightings of a number of serpent-like monsters - likened to Nessie herself - in the Chesapeake Bay where the Potomac River (which flows through Washington) meets the sea. On the 25th July, Donald Kyker, an ex-CIA man, and his family, saw a creature in the lower reaches of the Potomac - it was between 25-30ft long and "about as round as a telegraph pole...or at least its head and neck was, seen before it dived. Kyker phoned the Smoots - No, I don't make them up! - who live a bit further downstream. Myrtle Smoot and hubby looked out and there it was - heading for the bay. Within an hour they saw three more - a large one about 36ft long, maybe longer, and the smaller ones between 5-10ft - this time heading upriver. Her husband, Mr Smoot (love that name!), shot one of the smaller ones in the neck, fired a few more times, and watched the critters dive. Another witness to this spectacle, CP Stemmer, the Smoot's neighbour, said that although they looked like "self-propelled logs", they were definitely alive, moving faster than the water and making wakes. On 27 June, another Smoot neighbour, Mary Lewis, swimming with two cousins in a pool by the Potomac, said they saw several things poking out of the water too large to be ducks, snorkel tubes...or porpoises (the latter answering some doubting official of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission.) Main details from St Louis Post-Dispatch (MO) 20 Aug 1978 (Cr: Mark Hall). Other accounts: London Evening Standard 18 Aug 1978; Daily Express, Sun both 19 August 1978 (Cr: Ion Will, Paul Burd.) Roanoke Times & World News (VA) 18 Aug 1978 (Cr: Gregory Bale.) Washington Post 26 Aug (Cr: MA Hall).

A later report adds that Kyker thought it looked like "a big snake, about 100ft offshore...with a head the size of a cantaloupe." Since June about 30 people have seen the monster they have taken to calling 'Chessie', at the mouths of the Potomac, Rappahannock and Pautuxent rivers. The reaction from 'experts' runs from the usual allegations that people are seeing things - porpoises, otters, and "large rays"... director of the Calvert Marine Museum, Ralph Eshelman said: "I've seen 50 rays with their tails raised stirring up a boil in the water and it looks very strange." Interesting but is it relevant? - to the more helpful attitude of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, where ichthyology dept head John Merriner said: "This is one hell of an animal to be in the bay. The trail is cold now, but we will try to track it anyway." There was also the usual appeal to ritual when reason failed - at Kimsale, Virginia, on the Yeocomico River, 200ft of plastic tubing crowned by a hobbyhorse head was formally shot at with a toy cannon. A week later, the Smoot's son, 11, saw the creature for the second time. Long live Chessie! St Louis Post-Dispatch (MO) 1 October 1978 (Cr: William Zeiser.)

Another new monster to come to our notice is the sighting of a water monster at the Grootvlei pumping station, near Vereeniging, South Africa, by four people - but that's all the report says. It is suggested that a Mr.B Byrne-Daly created the monster 14 years previously, when as editor of a local paper he pleaded for a road to the new Vaal Dam, and some kind of attraction out there like Nessie. "Within a week," he said,"the first wild-eyed believer came rushing in with the

news that there was indeed a beast in the dam...And after him there was an absolute flood of people saying the monster had breathed at them. They had seen its huge red eyes glowing in the darkness like coals, from the safety of their treetop perches. It was remarkable...people camped out there for days, scanning the dam with telescopes." Amazing! Shades of the 'Angels of Mons'! No explanation is given as to why the monster should reappear (in any degree of solidity) after last vanishing in 1964 -- this present sighting was sometime in the week 17-23 April 1978. Maybe there is a monster there - stranger things have happened, as you know. Pretoria News (South Africa) 29 April 1978 (Cr: Chris J Holtzhausen.)

The third and newest monster surfaced in Lake Ikeda in the Satsuma peninsula of Japan's Kyushu island. One of the 20 witnesses, Yukata Kawaji, said he saw a huge monster with two humps swimming swiftly from north to south - after two minutes it sank from view. Straits Times (Singapore) 2 October 1978 (Cr: IAWill.)

AN AFRICAN 'BIGFOOT'

A French social scientist, Ms Jacqueline Roumeguere-Eberhardt, of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, in Paris, has announced that she may have found the 'missing link' postulated by the Darwinians. She has researched among African tribes for 25yrs, the last 10 among the Masai of southern Kenya and their relations in the north. Over the years she heard many tales of strange forest beings but she took no notice until last November when a youth told her that he had been held captive for an hour by a creature that "seemed to be human but was very hairy on all his body and had a low forehead covered with hair." Then a group of warriors presented her with a bow, arrows and a bag, all of an unfamiliar design, which they said had been dropped by one of the creatures when they surprised him in the forest. Since then Ms Roumeguere has collected 31 accounts (she speaks fluent Masai) of sightings and encounters in 11 forests in Kenya, and has identified 4 distinct types of creature, which she calls 'Mr X'.

'X One' is a classic big foot, hairy and huge of stature. When one caught the young man, it examined him and his weapons carefully, broke arrows and put them back in their sheath. He has been seen carrying buffalo meat which suggests to Ms R-E that the animal might be social and intending to share with a group.

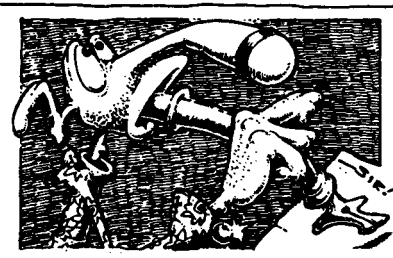
'X Two' is tall, thin and has a hairless beige-coloured body topped with curly black hair. They appear to live in caves, and 'children' have been seen.

'X Three' is "very old" (?). "Tall males have been seen felling a buffalo with an uprooted tree with its roots carved into spikes, and using a spear-like knife to cut out its internal organs which are then eaten on the spot."

'X Four' is a pygmy with a short fat body, hairy chest, back and thighs, and often carries a digging stick with which he unearths tubers.

X-One's seem to have great curiosity. A man taking a sheep to slaughter in the forest says he came face-to-face with one - the man ran off leaving the sheep. X-One "...only looked at it as though he had never seen one before. He did not beat it or kill it..." but examined its eyes and stomach. One woman was suddenly confronted by a "Mrs X-One" and to placate the creature the woman offered a calabash of milk. The creature did not seem to know what to do and gnawed at it spilling the milk. It seems that Ms R-E and the Masai are planning an expedition into the remote forests...so stay tuned for further details. The Australian 3 October; Guardian 4 October 1978 (Cr: Ion Will, Paul Sieveking, Douglas Wakson.)

RJMR



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HITLER IN LIVERPOOL

from K Harrocks, Cheshire:

In FT23p33, Robert A Wilson said that Hitler lived in Liverpool but this could not be confirmed. Well I remember seeing a series on Liverpool in the Liverpool Echo a couple of years back, and it showed, in a photograph, the street and house where he stayed with his sister. ((See also Tony Bond's letter, FT25p48. An item recently appeared in Sunday People 10 Sept 1978 (Cr: IAW) describing a diary kept by an Irish girl, one of whose relations married Adolf's brother Alois, settling in Liverpool. Adolf visited them in 1911 when he was 22, and yes he did have his moustache then. The diary was discovered by novelist Beryl Bainbridge, who has a novel based on it, Young Adolf,

coming out this November. She says the house was destroyed, ironically, during a German air raid. Curiously, the whole matter came to light in the Times (10 Oct) in a note about William Hitler, the son of Alois and the Irish girl, Bridget Dowling. William Hitler emigrated to the US at the start of WWII, joined the USNavy and changed his name to settle down in obscurity.(Thanks to Sydney Morning Herald, Australia, 12 Oct - Ed)).

DARTMOOR PONY DEATHS

from Paul W Baines, Surrey:

Bob Skinner mentioned to me that you would be interested in hearing details of my investigation, 12 months ago, into the Dartmoor pony deaths in Cherry Brook valley near Postbridge. I understood from the locals - ie the residents of Powder Mill Cottages, near the scene of the deaths - that the carcasses had been discovered as far back as April '77. Pony deaths on the moor are considered to be a common event during winter, generally from a combination of malnutrition and cold. It was only when the pet-shop owner from Tavistock discovered them, in July '77, that public attention was drawn to the event.

I spoke to Mrs Joanna Vinson, veterinary surgeon and secretary of the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Association, who carried out the post-mortem examinations of the carcasses. She stated that the rate of decomposition was normal and that the carcasses had been ravaged by predators. She further suggested that the animals had fallen down the steep side of the valley where mutilation occurred by falling among the boulders that litter the valley. She concluded that something must have caused them to stampede over the steep side of the valley.

I visited the scene of the event early in August '77 and found nothing other than I expected. It seemed quite reasonable to assume that the animals, weakened by malnutrition in the winter months, could easily have fallen down the steep side, receiving severe injuries upon the many rocks . The reason for them taking fright and stampeding (if this is the case) remains obscure. Suggestions that they were chased by someone driving a landrover are absurd...no four-wheeled vehicle could be driven in that terrain without having its bottom ripped out by concealed rocks. A skilled motorcyclist could, perhaps, have made it across that part of the moor. I do not feel inclined to jump to any conclusions about whether UFOs were involved in this case. ((We rounded up the pertinant reportage back in FT22p30 and FT23p3, and in the latter citation we learn that the DLPA (whose secretary Paul cites above) suggested the ponies ate the poisonous bog asphodel The case still hasn't been accounted for convincingly - perhaps its too late and too cold now? - Ed))

THE FERAL EARL OF DERBY

from Paul Burd, Essex:

I've just finished the section in PHENOMENA on children brought up by animals, and I saw mention of an Earl of Derby being brought up by an eagle, and can add a little information. After reading in FT24p11 about eagles carrying off children, I was intrigued by the name of a pub in Brentwood, Essex - the 'Eagle and Child'. A notice inside told the story that an Earl of Derby (it doesn't say which) was out on his land (it does n't say where) when he saw an eagle carrying off a child. He gave chase and rescued the baby which was subsequently brought up as his son and heir.

For a touch of synchronicity, we drove down a lane called Eagle Way, about 2mls from the pub.

FATEFUL FAYETTE, & 'KANGAROO GIRL'

from AH Debnam, W Australia:

I was surprised at the omission, by Bill Grimstad (FT25p5-8), of the 'infamous' L Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, whose first name - whether adopted later or not I'm unaware - is Lafayette! He surely fits the theme. ((And Larry Arnold told us recently he was schooled at a Lafayette College. Hmmmm! - Ed))

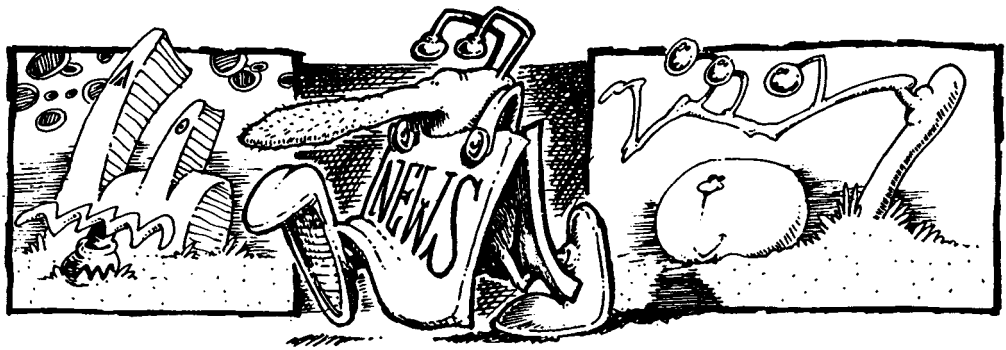
I'm afraid you can scrap the Nullarbor (- no trees) Kangaroo Girl (FT25 p9) from your files. On excellent authority from a very close friend I'm assured this was a hoax. He was in the area for quite a while a month after the event (which was about May/June 1972). He met the people involved who informed him how the whole story had been rigged as a tourist attraction. They even went to the extent of showing him how they caught the 'roos alive and released them for the filming. The 'nymph' did not live wild in the bush, nor, regretfully, did she run naked with the 'roos - though she did spend some time out there in a caravan. She, and the others involved in the hoax, left the area some months after the event.

HARRY PRICE AND ROSALIE

from Stan Farnsworth, Lakeside Hfx Co, Nova Scotia, Canada B0J 1Z0.

For over eight years my associate in London, Mr Lester Macintyre, and I have

been researching the 1937 Harry Price/ Rosalie case ((see Ed's note below)) - on my part mostly by mail or on trips to London. Over the years many professional researchers, including members of the SPR, have tried to find the house in South London where the Rosalie seance was held, from the description of the house by Price, plus other clues, to decide once and for all whether the case was genuine or a fiction. In recent years the case was written up in magazines, pocketbooks and in David Cohen's Price and his spirit child Rosalie (1965); and last year the BBC made a filmed documentary on the case which has yet to be presented. Would any of your readers be interested in helping us with this case? ((Interested parties please write to Stan at the above address. Price went to a private house in south London to investigate reports of a regular and full materialization of a medium's spirit guide, a girl of 11yrs. This girl, Rosalie, obligingly materialized and Price satisfied himself that she was warm, soft and breathing, and etherially beautiful. He wondered later whether he had indeed witnessed a "living or semi-living materialization", but the pressure of work prevented him returning to the house as he intended, and soon the case lapsed. The case still arouses passions, both for and against Price and his work - Ed))



FAIRY BATTLES

A few weeks ago the BBC screened their TV play on the Cottingley 'fairy photos' mystery - and I thought they treated the subject about as fairly as possible, giving a sympathetic treatment to all the angles pro and con. The whole thing was spoiled in advance by James Randi who gives a convincing portrayal of a man terrified of the least acknowledgement of the existence of mysteries. On behalf of the Committee for the Scientific Claims of the Paranormal (CSICP) Randi tried to get the BBC to preface the play with the announcement that the photos were decidedly faked by the two girls Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths. To their credit the BBC refused. Randi bases his 'exposure' on the computer-aided analysis of the photos by William Spaulding and Robert Sheaffer, whose brief and hasty look at Doc Shiels' famous Nessie picture (see FT24p14) left much to be desired. Randi, however, is convinced that Spaulding and Sheaffer have found flat cardboard-like images and artifacts that look like string. Anyone familiar with the Cottingley photos will readily acknowledge that in many ways they are unconvincing in a way that immediately arouses reasonable questions and suspicions...and yet after several professional examinations to date have failed to detect obvious signs of fakery. Indeed the most violent reaction against them has been of the kind: "Fairies don't exist - therefore the photos are fakes." Sheaffer has taken an across-the-board swipe at all those who have believed the photos genuine, or who have drawn attention to them (he would rather see them forgotten) in anything other than an attitude of disbelief - see his writings in Fate June 1978 pp 76-83, and Page Research Library Newsletter 20. See also Jerry Clark's response in Fate Nov 1978 pp68-71. While there is still room for doubt, about whether they are genuine photos of genuine fairies or projections of the girls' imaginations psychically imprinted onto film, or faked, and doubts too about Randi's exposé, I prefer to keep an open mind. True or false - and there is some truth in fiction and vice versa - the case against the photos has hardly been fairly presented. A brief report on Randi's crusade against the fairies is in New Scientist 10 August 1978.

HEAVEN COULDN'T WAIT!

On the 5th August Pope Paul VI was ill, so his doctors ordered a "complete rest". On the evening of the next day, 6 Aug, his condition worsened and he died at 9.40pm, taking his doctors' advice quite literally! Thus began an astonishing two and a bit months for Vatican-watchers and phenomenalists.

On that fateful 6 Aug the news spread rapidly throughout Italy and the world. As word reached the Druogno valley on Italy's NE border with Switzerland, we are told that "minutes later" torrential rain began that lasted 30 hours. The old folk said "The angels are weeping for the Pope." The damage was extensive, with the worst flooding in the Lugano area for 25 years. The "cloudburst" cut visibility down to 100yds, while hailstones the size of cherries smashed windows, destroyed crops and stripped leaves from trees. The waters accumulated so rapidly that one old couple on opening their front door were pushed back into the house as the torrent rose to shoulder height - cars were swept away, bridges shattered, communications knocked out, trees uprooted, and land was washed away. One report said the topography of the region has been permanently changed - at least 10 died and hundreds were made homeless. One old man said he had never experienced anything quite like this in all his 71yrs in the valley.

On 13 August, Cardinal Paul Yu Pin of Nanking, China, who resided in Taiwan since his expellation, died in a clinic in Rome.

17 August - the third tremor in 3 weeks rocks the northern suburbs of Rome - we don't know the dates of the first two tremors but they come within this portentious period.

After much public speculation Cardinal Albino Luciani was chosen to be the new Pope, on 26 August, and sadly, he died on 28 September, of a heart attack, as did Paul VI and Cardinal Yu Pin. Luciani chose the name John-Paul I in honour of his two predecessors and thereby became the first Pope since Simon Peter (technically Peter I) to have a double name. If you were pessimistic you might imagine that it was a bad start for any pope, to break a centuries-old tradition in a church with a strong belief in tradition for its own sake. There was more to come...John Paul decided that he wouldn't be crowned in full pomp, nor would he use the portable throne on which popes were traditionally carried on high in procession so their majesty could be seen by all. The result is that many Catholics, a bit baffled by the double name, could imagine he had not been fully installed, and many thousands, unable to see his diminutive eminence from behind the front rows of clergy, had to rely on newspaper and TV photos for their impressions. But I count the first uncomfortable omen to be the puff of smoke from the Sistine Chapel roof that signalled his election - it should have been 'white' for a positive decision and 'black' for negative - instead it came out grey, to the confusion of all observers.

For those following the omens, the week after JP's election was happier because the Holy Shroud went on display in Turin for the first time in 45 years, and on 19 Sept the powdered blood of St Januarius liquified on time.

On 5 September, the visiting second highest ranking member of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Nikodim, collapsed and died during an audience with JP in the pope's private library - another heart attack!

On 16 Sept there was a total eclipse of the moon - but also on that day, and the two previous days (ie 14-16) there were reports of a brilliant yellow and green triangular shaped unidentified object in the skies of Sardinia, Sicily and Tuscany, which was also seen overhead in Rome on those days. Arab News, and Saudi Gazette both 17 Sept 1978 (Cr: Ion Will.)

John Paul was found dead in bed, the light still on, at about 5.30am on 29 Sept. He had apparently died, while reading Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ, at about 11pm the night before - and unless I'm wrong, there's something ironic about the head of the Catholic Church dying without the last rites, one of the church's main rituals. Many thousands of people all over the world were shocked at his quite unexpected death. Evangelist Billy Graham said that in the series of deaths God had a message for the Church - but he didn't know what. Others suggested that this was God's way of saying the wrong pope had been elected. The cardinals on the other hand, who invoke God's guidance in their selection conclave, said they were absolutely certain that the Holy Spirit had neither reproved nor punished them. The lesson was one of death in the midst of life. Unhappily bad luck dogged even John Paul's funeral service as for the second successive day (3 Oct) Rome was "lashed with torrential rain"...and as if that were not enough

rumours were rapidly accumulating that JPI might have been murdered by extremists. There were also growing calls for a post-mortem on JP (despite the ban on papal p-ms by Paul VI himself) from even ultra-conservative groups within the Church. People began calling TV phone-in shows with their beliefs that the pope did not die a "natural death". And matters were not helped when the rebel archbishop Marcel Lefebvre said publicly: "It is difficult to believe the death was natural, considering all the creatures of the devil which inhabit the Vatican." Now what does he know? JP reigned only 33 days, but his final audience, on 27 Sept, was being claimed as the cause of a change of heart in a leading member of the racist/facist National Front party in England. Although not a Catholic or religious he was touched by the pope's sincerity and has now resigned all NF obligations.

Now we have a new pope, John Paul II, formerly Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, of Krakov, Poland. Interestingly many commentators missed this pope's portent. Paul VI was in the habit of setting a treasured alarm clock to wake him at 6am each day - it went off again unexpectedly at the moment of his death. He had used the clock ever since, in 1923, he was a Vatican diplomat in Poland. We have a few other numerological notes. John Paul I was 23 when he was ordained, and was the 263rd pontiff. The Shroud was last shown in 1933...and although there were 115 members of the Sacred College of Cardinals when Paul VI died, but due to inability to travel, or illness, only 111 could attend each conclave - in the last 150 years there have been 11 conclaves averaging 11 days for election. Curiously the man who ended up as John Paul I's successor was one of those who missed JP's election through illness. The shortest ever reign of a pope was that of Stephen II, elected on 23 March 752 - an hour!

Sources: Newsweek 31 July; Sunday People 6 August 1978; Washington Post 7 & 17 August; New York Times 9 August; Times 9 August; London Evening Standard 11 & 16 Aug, 29 Sept; Guardian 14 & 24 Aug; Dallas Times Herald 17 Aug; Daily Telegraph 18 Aug, 30 Sept, 4 Oct; Sunday Times 27 Aug; London Evening News 5 Sept; The Australian 5 Oct; Daily Mirror 17 Ocober 1978. (Cr: Ion Will, John Michell, Al & Phyllis, TR Adams.)

According to a note in the Dallas Times Herald 14 August 1978, Universal TV and ABC have signed a deal to make a 3hr version of Arthur C Clarke's classic SF novel Childhood's End. If you have never read the novel, do so - it contains a good number of Fortean themes and insights into UFOs & parapsychology. (Cr: Thomas R Adams.)

Another Illuminati plot? On 14 Sept an attempt to deliver money to an extortionist who threatened to contaminate Tucson, Arizona, with bubonic plague, failed - the account doesn't say why or whether the man was caught! Egyptian Mail 16 Sept 1978 (Cr: Ion Will.)

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